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1813

MARGARITA.



A NOVEL.

FRONTISPIÈCE.



M. 1800

MARGARITA.

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF TRADITIONS.

“ The legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth.”

DR. JOHNSON'S LIFE OF WALLER.

VOL. I.

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MARGARITA.

CHAP. I.

THE wind blew shrill in the dark groves of cypress and larch, which shaded the monastery of the Benedictines; peals of thunder were heard over the city of Vienna, re-echoed from the trembling battlements of the cathedral.

The ancient dwelling of Canon Bernardo, which had been erected in the reign of the Emperor Henry the Fourth, was assailed by the wind, sweeping through

the area before the cathedral, and seemed to feel the blast from it's deepest foundation.

As Canon Bernardo returned from vespers, he beheld, through the Gothic windows of the cathedral, the heavens blackening with tempest, and hastened to seek shelter from the increasing storm within his own peaceful dwelling.

As he traversed the cloisters, whose arched roofs were scarcely enlightened by the last faint gleam of parting day, admitted through the storied windows, he heard a light foot, as it slowly trod the stone pavement; and looking back, he observed a female figure advancing through the gloom.

As she approached the venerable Bernardo, she stopped; and elevating her clasped hands to him, sighed deeply. The

Canon

Canon, supposing she meant to implore charity, drew from his pocket a piece of silver, which he presented to her; but, bowing her head, with a melancholy air, she rejected the offer.

Bernardo proceeded through the cloisters, which extended, on one side the area, nearly as far as his own house. He perceived that he was followed, but he forbore to look back. As he knocked at his door, the same figure moved slowly by him, heaving a deep sigh as she passed.

While the Canon demanded whether he could afford her any relief, the rays of the tapers with which the cathedral was still illumined, streaming through the lofty windows, cast a clear light on the figure, and discovered it to be that of a woman, of a majestic stature; a veil of black crape, thrown over her head,

swept it's fable folds on the ground : she bowed to the Canon, and beckoned to him to follow her.

Bernardo had already descended the steps before his door, intending to obey the awful signal, when an ancient servant appeared, and seeing his master proceeding into the area, ventured to expostulate with him for this imprudence ; availing himself of that authority which he had acquired by a long and faithful service.

“ Sir,” said Francis, “ do you see what a dreadful storm threatens us ? ”

The Canon instantly returned ; and Francis gave him his arm to assist him up the steps, adding, that another night his master should not go alone to vespers.

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The Canon informed him of the lady he had met in the cloisters, and expressed a wish to know something more of her.

"She is undoubtedly," returned Francis, "one of the holy sisters of the adjoining convent, who has procured permission to leave her cell, to perform some charitable act."

"It may be so," said the Canon; "yet, that I may be satisfied on this head, I wish you to go into the area in quest of this person, who is evidently in distress."

"Sir, it is late, and the storm increases," said Francis, shrugging up his shoulders, and opening the parlour door for his master.

"I must, however, be obliged," replied the Canon, enforcing his com-

mands with a frown, which instantly passed away, and his countenance resumed it's usual serenity.

Francis bowed ; but knowing that his master's resentment was always very transient, he yielded to the fears with which the figure had inspired him, and instead of venturing into the area, retired to his fire-side.

The parlour, into which the Canon had entered, was above forty feet in length, terminated with an oriel, raised by seven steps, from which might be taken an oblique view of the cathedral, elevating it's Gothic fanes above the shadowy garden of the neighbouring monastery.

The dark wainscot of this apartment was on one side concealed by frames of cedar, containing a large collection
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of books; the ponderous works of the venerable fathers were reared to the upper compartments, while the lower were appropriated to more modern productions. History, poetry, and even a few of the most select romances were not omitted; while on the opposite side the walls were decorated by a long series of family pictures — representations of ladies, whose beauties had long since faded, and of men, whose once renowned deeds were now buried in oblivion.

The family of the Canon had formerly held an honourable station in society, but of late it had sunk into indigence, till the virtues of Bernardo restored it to that distinction, from which it had fallen.

A large wood fire glowed on the hearth; by which sat Christina, the sister

and only companion of the Canon. This excellent lady was some years younger than her brother; and having lost her parents at an early period of life, had never known happiness till the good Bernardo removed her from the society of harsh relations, and placed her at the head of his family. She had never possessed any of those personal attractions, which give a fancied superiority to trifling and even worthless youth: her meek spirit taught her to submit to the will of those whom she could not revere; and, until encouraged by an affectionate brother, the powers of her mind had lain dormant, and her languid spirits had refused to stimulate her to exertion: but, in more prosperous circumstances, her soul recovered its native energy, and in the active pursuit of benevolence she
made

made efforts, of which she had formerly thought herself incapable.

As the storm continued to rage with increasing violence, Christina, who had been apprehensive for her brother, received him with unusual pleasure; she stirred the fire, and poured out some coffee, while the Canon placed himself in his arm-chair, and opened a folio on a desk before him.

Between the pauses of the thunder, Christina thought she heard the lamentations of some one in distress: she imparted her apprehensions to her brother; they both listened for some moments in deep silence. The thunder seemed to gather from afar; it rolled above their heads, and at length burst tremendously over the city—the low echoes of the

dying sound were succeeded by a feeble cry of terror.

Christina opened the window, and looked into the garden, from whence the cry seemed to proceed. At intervals she saw the cathedral illumined by lightning, which diffused it's red glare over the dark battlements; but, although the cries still continued, she could discover no human figure.

"Where is Francis?" said the Canon, arising, and taking his staff; "can nothing be done for the unhappy person?" Francis appeared; he was pale, and evidently terrified.

"From whence do these cries proceed?" said the Canon impatiently.

Francis shook his head, and advanced slowly to the hall door, followed by Christina. As he endeavoured to draw
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the bolt, the forked flame darting before the window, was succeeded by a violent clap of thunder, attended with the shrieks of an infant. For some moments the wind, gathering round the hall, blew with so much violence against the door, as to render it impossible to open it.

The shrieks, which were frequently intermitted, became every instant fainter, till at length they died away in low murmurs on the attentive ear.

“Hasten, I entreat you, Francis,” said the terrified Christina, “that we may administer comfort to this unfortunate person before it is too late.”

His efforts at length proved successful, and the opening door disclosed the most affecting object to the compassionate spectators:—a mantle of purple velvet was spread beneath the porch, on which

lay a little babe, whom terror seemed almost to have deprived of life.

The united exertions of the Canon and Francis could scarcely prevent the door from being closed by the impetuous blast, while Christina gently raised the babe in her arms, and laid it, cold and senseless, in her bosom; she carried it into the library, and chafed it's limbs by the fire.

The Canon gazed with compassion on the lovely features of the sweet infant; he addressed it, still unconscious of all that passed, in the most moving terms which soft pity could dictate; and when a female servant entered to assist Christina in recovering the child, who still but faintly breathed, he turned aside, removed his folio from his desk, replaced it on the shelf, and stirred the fire; yet
all

all his efforts were vain to conceal the tears which trembled in his eye.

When Christina removed the mantle and the hood, which covered the infant, she was not more astonished at the richness of her dress than at the uncommon beauty of her countenance; a beauty which, as she gradually revived, became every instant more apparent, and more attractive. Her eyes, which were now opened, were large yet mild, and of so dark yet bright a blue, that they gave an animation and intelligence to her countenance far exceeding her years. How infinitely delicate were her fair proportioned features! how expressive of that mildness of disposition so peculiarly engaging in the female mind! a profusion of light brown hair shaded her forehead, and hung in ringlets over her shoulders.

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The complexion of this sweet babe was perfectly fair: when she smiled, when she attempted to speak, when she cried, an animated and lovely bloom suffused her cheek, which quickly passed away. Her robes, enriched by the most costly ornaments, proved her to be of no mean parentage; a small picture was fastened round her neck by a chain of gold, representing on one side a young nobleman, of an engaging countenance, and on the other, a lady, whose animated features were of the highest stile of beauty. Around the edge of the painting, which was set with diamonds, were several letters in white enamel; but they were so indistinct that Christina imagined them to have been purposely effaced.

When the infant recovered her senses, she became uneasy to find herself among strangers;

strangers; she concealed her face in the bosom of Christina, and seemed for a time to shrink from the observation of those who surrounded her.

The Canon and his sister formed many vain and unsatisfactory conjectures concerning her.

"Heaven be praised," said Bernardo, "that she is preserved from the dangers of the storm! — in future she shall never want a protector. Sweet infant!" he added, as he took her dimpled hand within his, "you shall find a father in me. Never more shall you be exposed to the mercy of strangers. She is a gift from heaven, my sister!" he proceeded; "she will be the consolation of my declining years, and, in her, I shall again become young."

“ Her friendless situation,” replied Christina, “ has already interested me deeply in her welfare ; and I only fear that I should place my affections on an object, of which I may, at some future period, be deprived : her parents, if they still live, cannot entirely abandon their sweet child.”

“ Since such is the case, my sister,” said the Canon, “ it would be prudent not to attach yourself too closely to the infant. We will do all that compassion can require of us for her, but we must not allow her to engage our affections too deeply.”

Christina smiled at this advice, but made no reply.

At that moment their attention was excited by the cries of the child, who, struggling to disengage herself from the
arms

arms of her benefactress, sprung to the floor, and tripped lightly round the room, vainly looking for those who were accustomed to attend her. Her cheeks were moist with tears. Christina and her excellent brother gazed upon her with love and pity.

As the eyes of the sweet infant met those of her protectors, a lovely smile animated her features; a thousand graces, unseen before, now appeared upon her countenance, and her eyes sparkled with gaiety. Christina embraced her with ecstasy, and the good Bernardo implored a blessing upon her.

She refused the food which had been prepared for her. At one moment she seemed pleased, at another impatient: at length she began to weep; her lip quivered,

vered, and her countenance was expressive of the deepest distress.

Christina pressed her to her heart, and having composed her to sleep, laid her on a pillow, in her own bed.

The storm had spent its fury during the night, and the morning dawned serenely on the city. When Christina awoke, she found the infant still sleeping beside her; she kissed her rosy cheek; the babe opened her dark blue eyes, and smiled—the transient sorrows of the past night were forgotten, and during the course of the day she became in some [degree attached to her new protectors.

Every inquiry was made by Canon Bernardo, but no traces could be discovered of the parents of the child; a circumstance which, considering her age, and

and the richness of her dress, appeared the more extraordinary.

Christina having again examined the enamelled characters on the edge of the painting, discovered a few imperfect letters, which, after much consideration, she conjectured to have once composed the name of Margarita, by which the infant was soon after privately baptized by the Canon.

Notwithstanding the injunctions which Bernardo had laid upon his sister, his affection for the little Margarita became so strong, that he felt for her all the anxieties of a father. This excellent man had formed so favourable an opinion of human nature, and the ingenuousness of youth, that he was persuaded indulgence could never be injurious to it; and yielding to his natural benevolence, he loaded
his

his adopted child with perpetual favours, and tokens of his affection. Even Margarita might have suffered by his injurious kindness, had not Christina, with the prudence ever predominant in all her actions, counteracted the effects of this amiable failing, or made it subservient to the good of her child.

A light closet over the oriel had been assigned to Margarita, as soon as she was of an age to estimate such a possession; its simple furniture was the work of Christina; and the Canon had taken the most valuable prints of his collection to ornament the walls.

To use his own words, nothing was too good for his adopted daughter—for the sweet child, which heaven had sent him to solace his declining years; he would even have robbed his library of
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the most bulky editions of the fathers, could they have afforded her pleasure. In the meantime, her mind was enriched with valuable knowledge, and her habits were strengthened by the purest principles of virtue, while she acquired every feminine accomplishment which the ablest preceptors of Vienna could impart.

As she advanced in age, her improvements became more rapid; her disposition was mild and affectionate; her stature tall, and her air serenely dignified; she was thoughtful, and fond of retirement, yet in society she was cheerful and innocently gay.

She possessed such an uncommon command of temper, that from her earliest childhood she was seldom observed to be irritated by any adverse event: her mind was not incapable of painful impressions; but

but she had been early taught, that where reason submits to passion, inevitable misery is the consequence.

From the retirement in which she had been educated, estranged from every gaiety of life, and accustomed only to the society of the venerable divines of the cathedral, or the ancient friends of Christina, she had been compelled to seek her amusements in her own exertions, and had acquired the habit of varying each hour by innocent and improving occupations.

Music and painting she had been taught to consider merely as relaxations from those deeper studies, whose tendency is to strengthen the mind, and to give it that energy, without which virtue has no stable basis, and our best actions are but the works of some kindly passion,

passion, which acquires a momentary influence, and, having exhausted it's strength, sinks into inactivity.

She would often contemplate those great truths, which are of the last importance to every human being; and yet, from their noble simplicity, are not above the comprehension of a child. Her mind was untainted by prejudice, and unruffled by passion, and her attention was naturally directed to serious subjects by every surrounding object.

The cathedral, elevating it's Gothic turrets above the lowly roofs of the adjacent Monasteries, constantly presented itself to her view; and she believed that an assemblage of beings resided amid the dark and silent recesses of the cloisters, who knew no other wish than to serve their Maker, and to prepare for the happiness

pinets of a better world. To imitate the imaginary perfections of these was her highest ambition; and although time removed the illusion, yet when she afterwards found that vice had polluted even the hallowed courts of the monastery, virtue was too firmly rooted in her breast to be weakened by the prevalence of bad example.

Thus did Margarita gradually acquire the superior knowledge of an advanced age, while her mind, still retaining the purity of childhood, was capable of being gratified by the most simple pleasures. She loved to wander in the gloom of evening on the terrace, before the windows of the library; she delighted in the trim garden of the Canonry, whose corresponding alleys were bordered by yew and shapely box, and whose square par-

terres

terres were gay with flowers of various colours; she knew how discordant this taste was with the mild beauties of Nature. Yet how interesting are those scenes where our early days are spent! Each object was endeared to her by the memory of some infantile delight, and she would have seen, with regret, the formal yew give place to the spreading chesnut, or silver-rinded birch.

From the terrace she could hear the evening hymn, and the soft notes of the organ, swelling, in harmonious sounds, beneath the vaulted roof of the cathedral; or hearken, with pleasing melancholy, to the holy choir, singing the *requiem* to the soul of some departed brother.

CHAP. II.

MARGARITA had attained a considerable age without having reflected on her orphan state with any degree of painful solicitude: she had always loved Christina as a mother, and the paternal affection of the Canon had made a deep impression on her grateful heart. She observed with sorrow the symptoms of age, which gradually stole upon him: his voice, which had lost it's former strength, still retained it's tones of sweetness; his eyes beamed with an universal benevolence, originating from the high opinion he entertained of mankind,

mankind, and which a long residence in a world, where he had often met with coldness and ingratitude, had been unable to eradicate. It was one of his favourite maxims, that human Nature is often led astray, but seldom acts intentionally wrong.

At the age of forty he was advanced to the Canonry of St. Stephen, in the City of Vienna. He was afterwards offered higher dignities in the church, but an attachment to his present situation determined him to decline accepting them.

Christina had carefully preserved the picture which was found on the bosom of the infant Margarita, to whom she had often shewn it, telling her, that she might perhaps, at some future period, see the persons whom it represented: the lovely

girl would frequently kiss the picture, and gaze upon it with delight.

Margarita was now arrived at that age at which Christina resolved to consign this valuable charge to her, and to disclose every circumstance which related to her first arrival at the Canonry : she profited by this occasion to give her much excellent advice ; she impressed her mind with the highest sense of filial piety, and of those sacred duties, from the performance of which we are not released by the neglect, or even the inhumanity of those to whom we owe our existence.

From that time Christina frequently conversed on this subject, and endeavoured to prepare her gentle pupil for every reverse of fortune. She accustomed her to be independent of those numerous enjoyments, which are too frequently
judged

judged indispensable to happiness, and to sacrifice her own pleasure to that of her fellow-creatures. These precepts were not impressed by severe injunctions.—Christina knew the influence of example, and she endeavoured to be the model of every virtue she inculcated.

Sixteen years had already elapsed, since Margarita had become an inhabitant of the Canonry, when one evening, as she was walking with her excellent instructress on the terrace before the windows of the library, she was surprised by the appearance of the Canon, who advancing hastily towards his sister, informed her of the unexpected arrival of Ernulphus Gefner, the beloved friend of his youth.

Christina received this information with tears of joy, and hastened into the library to welcome her venerable guest.

Ernulphus Gefner was of the most serene and interesting aspect; his grey locks hung loosely on his shoulders, and his eyes were expressive of wisdom and benevolence. Although he had been separated from Canon Bernardo during the greater part of his life, yet they were endeared to each other by the recollection of a friendship which had formed the happiness of their younger days. Ernulphus had been resident for some years in the family of the Marquis Ulderic, where he had undertaken the tuition of two youths, one of whom was the son of the Marquis, and the other, whose parents were in a humble station, was educated as his companion. These young gentlemen, whom Ernulphus had brought with him to the Canonry, by their intelligent and engaging air, instantly conciliated
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the favour of the Canon and his sister. They were both tall and graceful in their figures, while the serene countenance of the young Marquis formed a striking contrast with the animated features of his friend.

His eyes were expressive of thought, and sometimes even of a degree of melancholy; his auburn hair shaded his smooth and ample brow, and the soft tones of his voice denoted mildness blended with dignity and courage, while in every look, in every attitude, the youthful Albert revealed the native vigour of his mind. A bright and lovely bloom suffused his cheek, and heightened the lustre of his dark eye, which beamed with genuine and unsuspicious benevolence.

After having listened for some time to the conversation which took place be-

tween their tutor and the Canon, the young friends arose, and quitted the library, with the intention of visiting the Cathedral, leaving Bernardo at liberty to inquire more particularly into the present situation of Ernulphus, and the characters and dispositions of his pupils.

“ I was introduced to the Marquis Ulderic, nearly nineteen years ago, at Rome,” said Ernulphus, in answer to his friend’s inquiries ; “ he engaged me to be the companion of his travels, promising me a handsome provision if I would accompany him to his palace, which is not far distant from this city. While we remained at Rome, the Marquis formed a connexion with the widow of an Italian nobleman, whose considerable possessions induced him to overlook many defects
which

which rendered her less worthy to become his wife.

“We returned to Ormund Cassel immediately after this marriage. A conviction that my presence was not agreeable to the Marchioness, induced me to leave the family a few weeks subsequent to our return: indeed the scenes to which I was witness during my residence there were such as will not bear description! The Marchioness was so deeply engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, that she neglected the duties of a mother, and wholly relinquished the charge of her infant son to a favourite Italian domestic, with whom she left him, when debts, contracted in play, compelled the Marquis to yield the Palace of Ormund, with the adjacent territories, to the Prince del Castel Nuovo.

“About five years afterwards,” continued Ernulphus, “I became a second time an inmate of the family, and was appointed tutor to the young Marquis, in whom, by unremitting attention, I flatter myself that I have implanted those virtuous principles, which will render him a valuable and amiable character.

“The engaging disposition of Albert, the son of his nurse, had made so deep an impression upon the heart of Henry, that, having prevailed upon his father to allow his friend to be educated with himself, he seemed to have no other wish than to efface from the mind of Albert the painful sense of dependance.

“By degrees the playful fondness of infancy has matured into the sweetest, the most perfect friendship. Like twin-brothers, one chamber, one board, and

one bed have hitherto served them equally.

“The intrepid spirit of Albert has frequently urged him to acts, by which he might have forfeited the favour of those on whom he is dependant, had not Henry kindly drawn a veil over his errors, and gently stemmed the torrent of his impetuosity.”

“Heaven permit,” exclaimed the Canon, “that this delightful friendship may never be interrupted!”

“Alas!” replied Ernulphus, “we must not entertain such a hope; the dependant state of Albert renders it necessary for him to lead an active life; his virtues are resplendent; those of his friend, although equally valuable, are less conspicuous.

“The Marquis became jealous of the youth, who owed every thing to his

bounty ; and the Marchioness, incapable of estimating the merits of her own son, confessed that he was excelled by his indigent friend. Instigated by the mean passion of jealousy, the Marquis at length resolved to separate Albert from his son, and procured a situation for him in the army, of which the youth must take possession in the course of a few days.

“ When my pupils,” continued Ernulphus, “ were informed of the Marquis’s intention, they suffered the deepest distress ; their sleep was disturbed, their thoughts wandered from their studies, and their favourite amusements no longer interested them. It required my utmost exertions to fortify their minds, and reconcile them to the decision of the Marquis.”

This

This conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Margarita, and the return of the young Marquis and his friend.

After an evening spent in innocent and friendly conviviality, the little party retired for the night ; Ernulphus, in compliance with the sollicitations of the Canon, and the evident wishes of his pupils, having previously consented to remain another day at the Canonry.

But while the rest of the family enjoyed repose, undisturbed by any uneasy reflections, the young friends, who were so soon to be separated, employed a greater part of the night in conversing together.

“ Alas ! ” said Henry, “ what pleasures can compensate for the loss of the society of those we love ! ”

Albert

Albert expatiated with his usual vivacity on this subject, and concluded by delineating the plan of life he should wish to pursue, if he might be permitted to enjoy the presence of his friend.

“An elegant yet simple villa,” he said, “should be our habitation, situated in the shadowy recesses of a forest, and secluded from all the disturbances of public life. It should command, through an avenue in the wood, a remote view of fertile plains, bounded by mountains, faintly seen in the horizon; and the sound of distant waterfalls should sooth the ear.”

“And what should be our employments in this beautiful retreat?” said Henry.

“To civilize and promote the happiness of the neighbouring peasantry,” he replied.

“But

"But should not we want some person to conduct our domestic affairs?" asked the young Marquis, who accompanied his friend in all his visionary excursions.

"Since we have allowed our imagination to lead us so far," resumed Albert, "let us suppose that we had a sister, whom it would be our highest ambition to please, and whose smiles should be the reward of all our labours;—her gaiety should not arise from thoughtless levity; she should be sincerely, not affectedly refined. In short," he hastily added, "I cannot describe her more exactly than by saying, that she should resemble —; but I disturb your repose," said he, suddenly interrupting himself.

"You will inform me," returned Henry, "whom our imaginary sister should resemble."

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“It is of no consequence,” replied Albert; “I only meant to say that she would be all that is perfect—indeed I have almost forgotten what I wished to say—and perhaps, after all, the fair Margarita may not be exactly what she appears to be.”

Henry smiled, and the amiable friends sunk to sleep, side by side.

At breakfast on the following morning, Margarita, who seemed, from her appearance, not to have forgotten to select her most becoming ornaments, received her young companions with evident tokens of pleasure.

As the day was fine, Ernulphus proposed to the Canon that they should revisit their native hamlet, where many of his happiest days had been spent in the house of Bernardo's father. This village,
which

which was called Ermengarda, was not above a league distant from Vienna.

Francis received orders to prepare the old coach, and in less than an hour every thing was ready for the expedition.—Christina and Margarita, with Ernulphus Gefner and the Canon, were placed in the coach, while the young Marquis and his friend mounted their steeds, and rode before.

The eyes of Bernardo sparkled with delight as he looked alternately on his sister, his friend, and his adopted child; and as the coach passed slowly through the forest of the Carmelites, which formerly covered a tract of land on the eastern side of the city, and derived it's name from a monastery of that order, once situate in the centre of it, he addressed the young friends, whose steeds
pranced

pranced beside the carriage, encouraging them by his smiles, and exciting their gaiety by sallies of innocent merriment.

They at length arrived at Ermengarda, the situation of which demands universal admiration. It is placed in a very deep valley, encircled by hills, whose steep acclivities were at that time clothed with forests of birch and pine. In an amphitheatre of woods, commanding, from its lofty situation, a view of the Danube rolling through the depths of the valley below, appeared the ancient edifice, which was the birth place of Canon Bernardo. It had once been extensive, but the greater part of it was then fallen to decay; some of it, however, remained still entire. On a nearer approach to this delightful retirement, new beauties disclosed themselves to view: from the windows of the
venerable

venerable mansion the eye could penetrate into deep recesses of the forest. On one side a cataract appeared amid the trees, tumbling from the rocky heights, and winding it's course through the mazes of a shrubby dell, till at length, emerging from the woods, it rushed impetuously into the Danube.

The village of Ermengarda, and the mansion itself, were the property of the Duke del Castel Nuovo, who had received them, with many adjacent estates, from the Marquis Ulderic.

Christina, finding herself fatigued, excused herself from accompanying the rest of the party in their walks amid those delightful scenes; while Ernulphus and his friend, occupied with the remembrance of past events, soon left Margarita with her young companions, who conducted
her

her through that part of the forest which arose above the house.

By many narrow and intricate paths they at length reached the summit of the hill, where, on a cliff, whose craggy heights were inaccessible, excepting by a few rude steps, was erected a cross of white marble.

As they stood at the foot of the cliff, they were astonished at the sublimity of the prospect which presented itself. The village of Ermengarda, and even the ancient mansion, appeared quite in another region below them, and they beheld the rook heavily flagging her dusky wing above the summits of the forest.

Beyond the ridge of hills from which the cliff arose, they descried the Danube, as it flowed through the distant plains.

Although

Although the temperature of the air was serene in the vale, yet the blast, gathering around the rocky heights, was keenly cold, and on the upper part of the cliff huge masses of snow might be seen.

While they still contemplated the various objects which presented themselves to their view, among which the young Marquis had pointed out the marble domes of Ormund Cassel, situated amid groves of chestnut and pines, at some distance, on the banks of the Danube; a venerable peasant, with feeble steps, ascended the hill, carrying a basket of rushes. As he approached the little party, he bowed his head, and paused, as if waiting an opportunity to address them.

Henry drew from his pocket a piece of silver, which he reverently placed in the peasant's cap; and the old man, yielding
to

to the grateful effusions of his heart, proceeded to relate the simple traditions of the village.

“My young lady,” he said, directing his discourse to Margarita, “as you appear to be a stranger, you may perhaps be unacquainted with the history of yon marble cross upon the cliff. As our oldest villagers say, it was placed there by the command of the pious Empress Ermengarde, the wife of Lewis, son of the glorious Charlemagne; and truly,” proceeded the old man, “that lady preferred this valley to the most magnificent palaces of the Empire. A little below, you may still see the walls of a convent, which she founded, and where, as it is said, her remains were committed to the earth.”

Margarita smiled at the discourse of the peasant, who, having pointed out the
easiest

easiest path by which they might descend the hill, withdrew.

During the remainder of their walk, Henry and Albert endeavoured to amuse their companion by a description of many of the most striking scenes in the north, where one of the castles belonging to the Marquis Ulderich was situated; and as their conversation became by degrees less restrained, Henry related the plan of life which they had formed on the preceding night, omitting only one circumstance.

Margarita approved highly of this innocent scheme. How happy she thought she should be, to live in such a retirement as the young Marquis had described.

“Could any spot,” she replied, “be more adapted to your purpose, than the valley of Ermengarda, which Nature
seems

seems to have endowed with every beauty?"

Albert had remained silent for some time, hearkening to every word she uttered, and dreading lest Henry should betray what related to herself. The arrival of Francis to inform them that dinner was ready, terminated their conversation. In the meantime the Canon, having discovered that the mansion might be repaired with little expence, signified a wish that the Duke del Castel Nuovo would grant it to him, that during the heats of summer he might enjoy the refreshing shades of his native woods.

After a most delightful day, in which each party became every instant more deeply interested in the other, they returned to the Canonry. When they withdrew to their apartments, Margarita in
vain

vain endeavoured to sleep; she revolved in her mind every event of the past day, and lamented her approaching separation from her amiable and engaging companions.

CHAP. III.

ON the following morning a degree of melancholy was expressed in every countenance. Ernulphus with his pupils, had promised to spend a few days previous to the separation of the young friends with the Prince del Castel Nuovo, at Ormund Cassel, from whence Albert was to join his regiment, which was at that time stationed at Lintz, while the young Marquis returned to his father's castle.

When they arose to take their leave, the Canon, in an earnest manner, assured
Albert,

Albert, that he would always find a sincere friend at the Canonry, and entreated the young Marquis, should he ever return to Vienna, to honour him with a second visit.

Margarita found herself unusually agitated—she changed colour; and, to conceal her emotions, withdrew to the oriel, from whence the Canon soon recalled her to receive the blessing of Ernulphus. This trial she sustained with composure; but when the engaging Henry and animated Albert approached to bid her their last farewell, the tear, notwithstanding her utmost efforts to suppress it, trembled in her eye. She saw that her agitation was observed by her friends; she fancied that disapprobation was expressed in the countenance of Christina; she instantly withdrew the hand which she had

allowed one of the youths to take, and, after a short pause, retired.

When alone in her own apartment, she listened for some moments to the voices of the young Marquis and his friend in the hall; she soon heard the trampling of their horses upon the stone pavement, and again all was silent.

Sorrow for their departure was not the only painful sensation which disturbed the mind of Margarita; she was fearful of having incurred the disapprobation of those whom it was her highest wish to please! Her accustomed occupations had not power to interest her, and when she appeared before the Canon and his sister, they were astonished at the melancholy of her air.

When importuned by these kind friends, Margarita expressed her apprehensions

hensions left her unguarded conduct on taking leave of the Marquis and his friend had merited their censure.

Christina smiled. "My dear child," she said, "I could indeed wish you to have more command over yourself. At some future period you may find this weakness prejudicial to you. But I saw that you were conscious of your error, and therefore refrained from pointing it out to you."

"Christina," said the Canon, interrupting his sister, "on this occasion my sentiments do not coincide with your's. Are you not, pardon me, giving a lesson of dissimulation to Margarita? If parting with her friends gave her uneasiness, why should she conceal it, unless she wished to appear less amiable than she really is? I disapprove extremely," he added, with

a serious air, "of these modern refinements!"

"They would be totally unnecessary," replied Christina, "if all human beings were as artless and benevolent as yourself, my brother, or even, I might venture to say, as the pupils of our friend, Ernulphus. But in general society, in a world where our judgment is liable to be deceived by the most specious appearances, we should withhold from strangers those tokens of attachment which are due only to our old and well-tried friends."

"Well," said the Canon, "you may perhaps be right; I must not interfere. You certainly know best what becomes persons of your own sex: at the same time I may be allowed to say, that I saw nothing improper in Margarita's conduct this morning."

Christina

Christina smiled, and gave her hand to her brother; and thus the conversation concluded.

Some months had elapsed since the departure of Ernulphus, in which no event had taken place which could disturb the tranquillity of the Canonry. Margarita daily improved under the guidance of her excellent preceptors; she had already acquired her full height, and her features their due proportion; while her mind continued to expand itself, and to unite the force of maturer years with the innocence of childhood.

Christina and her brother had been particularly solicitous that, from her earliest infancy, she should never read any book, or hear any conversation, which might fully the native purity of her mind; and, alas! how few were the books, how

narrow the circle, to which she was limited!

“To act with integrity,” the Canon would frequently say, “it is not necessary to know the detail of those vices by which others have been ensnared. The mind, which is endowed with the love of virtue, will shun with horror the tracts of guilt; nor ever pry into those horrid mysteries, which to contemplate, however remotely, is in some degree to partake.”

Although Christina loved retirement, yet she would not have restrained her child from mingling with the innocent diversions of Vienna; but Margarita declined the tumultuous gaieties of public life. She possessed never-failing sources of amusement within herself, and she had never been taught to value those delusive pleasures, in the pursuit of which the happiness

pinets of youth is frequently sacrificed, and the choicest gifts of Nature ineffectually consumed.

The winter was already set in with unusual severity ; the whole country was covered with snow, and the ample stream of the Danube became one vast sheet of ice.

While the Canon and his friends, assembled at the cheerful yet sober board, were celebrating the feast of Christmas, a messenger arrived from the Prince del Castel Nuovo, to inform the Canon, that his Lord purposed that very evening to pay him a visit.

As Bernardo was entirely unknown to the Prince, he was unable to account for the honour which was thus proposed to be conferred upon him. When his il-

lustrious guest arrived, he withdrew to an adjoining apartment to receive him.

The Prince, as he entered, bowed with an easy and dignified air ; and, giving his hand to the Canon, professed the utmost pleasure in seeing him in good health.

This nobleman, although past the early prime of life, had not lost the animated bloom of youth. His finely proportioned features expressed strong and vivid passions, restrained alone by politeness. In his person he united the dignity of the German with the graceful ease of the Italian. When he smiled, his countenance assumed the utmost sweetness, and he could modulate his powerful yet melodious voice to every sentiment he wished to express.

The eyes of the good Bernardo glistered with every social affection as the

Prince accosted him. He inclined his head, and received the extended hand of his noble visiter with blended complacency and humility.

"To what fortunate event," he said, "am I indebted for this honour?"

"The young Marquis Ulderic, with his tutor," replied the Prince, "spent a few days at the Canonry in the summer, and, as I am informed, visited with you the valley of Ermengarda.

"Your wish," he added, "to spend your last days at your native place, is at once amiable and natural, and I rejoice that it is in my power to gratify it. In future I hope that Canon Bernardo will consider the mansion of Ermengarda as wholly at his service."

The Canon at that moment interrupted the Prince with an high encomium on his generosity.

“What you term generosity,” replied the Duke, “is but the tribute due to your excellencies. Although personally unknown to you, your virtues have not been concealed from me. It has long been my wish to be numbered among the friends of Canon Bernardo, and I sincerely rejoice that it is now in my power to commence an intercourse which, I flatter myself, will prove reciprocally beneficial.”

The air of sincerity with which he uttered these words had so deeply affected the good Canon, that, unable to repress his sentiments of gratitude, he poured them forth without restraint, and concluded by describing the numerous charms

charms which Ermengarda possessed in his eyes.

The Duke smiled, and seemed to listen to him with unfeigned pleasure.

"I can only lament," he replied, "that a knowledge of your wishes did not earlier empower me to gratify them. The little mansion at Ermengarda, although worthy of a more distinguished fate, has long been deserted, and is, I fear, at present in a state absolutely ruinous."

"It was a groundless apprehension of this last circumstance," resumed the Canon, "which prevented me from applying to you sooner, my Lord, for permission to close my days in my native place : but I perceive, from my late view of it, that it will be in my power to overcome all difficulties of this nature."

With

With regard to the terms by which the Canon was to hold this little tenement, their mutual generosity prevented any decision. The liberal offers of the Prince were rejected by Bernardo, who introduced other topics of conversation more worthy the attention of generous minds. He described the improvements he had made in the Canonry, spoke of the happiness of his venerable friend in his pupils, and, by an easy transition, of his own in his adopted daughter.

The Duke was attentive, and seemed to be pleased with the simplicity of the good Bernardo.

The Canon at length recollecting the friends whom he had left, entreated his illustrious guest to allow him to introduce them to him; a request with which he instantly complied.

The

The presence of the Prince heightened the festive gaiety of the little circle. He addressed much of his discourse to Christina; and while, in a great measure, he took the lead in the conversation, he discovered so much intelligence, and his manner was so inimitably graceful, that no one seemed disposed to interrupt him. An intricate question of theology was at length proposed: the few remarks which he made on this subject proved him to be fully master of it. He gave his opinions with diffidence, and appealed for a confirmation of them to the venerable fathers who surrounded him.

In the meantime Margarita had withdrawn to the oriel, where she remained silent, and, as she thought, unregarded. But her graceful and interesting figure had not escaped the observation of the Prince,
who,

who, while his companions were engaged in the warmth of argument, arose from the table, and approached the oriel.

"Pardon this intrusion, Madam," he said, as he placed himself beside her. "Our venerable friends," he added, with a smile, "must not allow the fair Margarita to remain neglected."

She was astonished to hear her name so familiarly repeated by the noble stranger.

"I am honoured by your attentions, my Lord," she replied, with some degree of hesitation; "but I am not authorized to exact the respect of those who are so greatly my superiors."

"When assured of the affection of our friends," resumed the Prince, fixing his penetrating eyes upon her, "we pardon every trifling neglect. The Canon has
this

this moment spoken of you in the highest terms: he possesses a paternal affection for you; but your numerous merits could not fail to attach a heart, alive like his to every finer feeling."

Margarita coloured: she lamented the imprudence of her adopted father, and, to change the subject, she made some slight remark entirely foreign to the purpose. The Prince observed her embarrassment, and soon, by the charms of his discourse, drew her attention from herself, and her present situation. He depicted the most beautiful scenes in Italy, and described the manners at that period prevalent in the courts of Europe.

"But neither the splendid gaieties of a court, nor the enchanting scenes which Nature unfolds to the view," continued the Prince, perceiving that she began to
listen

listen to him with pleasure, "have ever given me greater satisfaction than this visit to the Canonry. Independent of one charm this place possesses, on which I presume not to expatiate, my imagination is captivated by the awful majesty and deep gloom of every encircling object; and this, acting as a spell, restores the fancy to those ages of darkness, which owe their sublimity to the obscurity in which they are involved.

"A veneration for antiquity," he proceeded, "is certainly one of the most prominent features of the human mind; and sometimes induces us to regard with awe those objects which are in themselves contemptible."

"This respect for every thing that bears the marks of age, may perhaps be conducive to our happiness," said Margarita.

"And

“And do you not think,” he replied, “that it has more frequently a contrary effect, and retards rather than promotes the progress of refinement? How many absurd prepossessions, which are recommended only by their real or imaginary antiquity, gain an ascendancy over the mind, and involve it in one continued maze of error and deception!

“I have even heard it remarked, that Religion herself owes much of her influence to the same cause. Her various ceremonies were observed by our ancestors in the times of darkness, and the doctrines of fanaticism and superstition, pleading the authority of a length of ages, are become fundamental parts of our belief, and have rendered the mind almost incapable of admitting the lights of science and philosophy.”

Margarita

Margarita remained for some moments silent. She was perplexed by the novelty of these remarks; she saw their dangerous tendency, and was convinced of the propriety of expressing her disapprobation of them.

The Prince listened to her with much attention; and, when she ceased to speak,

“Mademoiselle Margarita,” he said, “misunderstands me. I perhaps did not express myself with sufficient accuracy; but it was far from my intention to depreciate those exalted principles of religion implanted in the mind by Nature. They claim universal veneration, and owe no weight either to antiquity, or the exertions of their advocates.”

The serious air with which the Prince uttered these words, induced Margarita

to

to hope that she had injured him by suspecting him of any degree of impiety.

Their conversation was soon interrupted by Christina, who joined them in the oriel. The attentive and pleasing manners of the Duke, entirely divested of any apparent haughtiness; the charms of his conversation, which was at once easy, dignified, and intelligent; added to an expression of countenance wonderfully attractive, could not fail of prepossessing Christina and Margarita in his favour. Christina, however, never permitted her judgment to be biased by specious appearances; but Margarita, notwithstanding her late experience, had allowed herself to be so interested in their noble visiter, that it gave her pleasure to hear him express a wish to see the Canon and his family again.

Her

Her prejudices in his favour were strengthened by the eulogiums of Bernardo.

“The Prince del Castel Nuovo,” exclaimed the amiable Canon, “is not only a perfect gentleman, but a man of erudition. He possesses abilities which would enable him to excel in any pursuit. His connexion will be an honour to my family, and a consolation to my old age. Would to Heaven,” he added, “that I were enabled to repay the obligations he has conferred upon me.”

The visit of the Duke was repeated before the conclusion of many days. He was accompanied by his sister, the Princess Claudia. This lady, being some years younger than her brother, was still in the early bloom of beauty ! The expression of her countenance, although languid,

languid, was not uninteresting; her features were finely turned, and her air graceful. Her voice was musically sweet, but a consciousness of her elevated situation seemed to have deprived her of every desire of pleasing the simple inhabitants of the Canonry, whom she had visited merely in compliance with the wishes of her brother.

The Prince endeavoured to compensate for the negligence of his sister by the most unremitting attentions on his part; and before he left the Canonry, he exacted a promise from the ladies, to be present at a gala which was preparing at the palace of Ormund for the ensuing week.

When Christina was left alone with her brother, she lamented the necessity of continuing

continuing the intercourse with the family of Castel Nuovo.

“You astonish me!” exclaimed the Canon, with some warmth; “wherefore should you object to a friendship with a man so amiable as the Prince?”

“I know little of his private character,” replied Christina; “he has not resided much in the neighbourhood of Vienna. But whatever may be the motives which have induced him to cultivate an intimacy with this family, I could wish it were possible to decline it.”

“And wherefore?” interrupted the Canon. “You cannot entertain any unfavourable suspicions of the Prince?”

“No,” replied Christina, “I would not be so unjust. I have seen nothing objectionable in his conduct; I am even prejudiced in his favour: but I must not
allow

allow my prejudices to blind me to the interest of my adopted child."

"Margarita is at present all that the fondest parent could wish, but she is still young. Her character is scarcely formed, and an introduction into gay and frivolous scenes might prove highly detrimental to her."

The entrance of Margarita terminated this conversation, which Christina did not at present renew.

CHAP. IV.

ON the day appointed for the gala at Ormund Cassel, as Margarita, returning from matin prayers, descended the steps of the cloisters into the area, she was accosted by a well-known voice ; and elevating the veil which shaded her face, she beheld the friend of the young Marquis Ulderic, who advanced gaily towards her.

As the animated Albert seized her hand, and pressed it to his lips, a sudden bloom
arose

arose in her cheeks, and a joy, which she was unable to conceal, sparkled in her eyes.

“Monsieur Albert,” she said, as he led her towards the Canonry, “to what happy event are we indebted for this visit?” But suddenly recollecting herself, she asked him, before he could reply, how he had supported the separation from the young Marquis and his venerable tutor.

“I would not allow myself,” returned Albert, “to indulge fruitless regrets. My beloved Henry, when we parted, exhorted me to remember the excellent precepts I had received from my tutor, and to endeavour, by a life of active virtue, to merit that happiness I would wish to obtain. I have been urged to exertions by other motives; I knew that

perseverance in the paths of rectitude was the only means by which I could entitle myself to your favour, to that of my friends at Vienna."

In uttering these words he opened the door of the Canonry, and conducted Margarita into the library, where, during the temporary absence of the Canon and his sister, they continued to converse together.

Margarita inquired after the young Marquis, and Ernulphus Gefner; and Albert reminded her of that day when they visited Ermengarda, every incident of which seemed to have made a deep impression on his mind.

The conversation insensibly led to the Prince del Castel Nuovo, and Margarita lamented the engagement which was formed for the evening.

"Are

“Are you going to Ormund Cassel?” said Albert hastily, while astonishment and regret were at once expressed in his countenance.

“What has induced the Prince to seek an intimacy with this family?”

While Margarita described his first interview, and extolled his condescension, Albert fixed his dark eyes upon the ground—

“Do I not owe this,” he said, in a low, yet disturbed tone, “to my own imprudence?”

Margarita for some moments feared to ask an explanation—

“Have you, Sir,” she at length said, “any reason to regret what has passed between the Prince and the Canon?”

“Mademoiselle,” he replied, “I have unintentionally excited your suspicions.

I trust that you will attribute it to a virtuous motive, if I grant that explanation which you demand. I know that I shall never have reason to lament the confidence I place in you. When I was first introduced to the Prince," continued Albert, "I was so charmed by his gay and attractive manners, that I neglected my studies to enjoy his society. Whatever were his faults, I should not have discovered them beneath that mask of elegant hilarity with which they were concealed. He had the address to disclose the most corrupt principles in terms so inimitably graceful, and with an air of such undefining simplicity, that my inexperienced mind would soon have been perverted by them, had I not received a timely warning from my tutor."—

"The

“The Prince del Castel Nuovo,” said the good Ernulphus, “possesses many virtues, and assumes the appearance of many others, which are calculated to render him pleasing to the undiscerning eye. When liberality does not interfere with his pleasures, he is so generous, he is so grateful to those who have served him, steady in friendship, and highly jealous of that honour, which chiefly consists in personal courage. His many defects are the consequences of a bad education. His mind was early depraved by sophistical principles; and his friends, in after life, being, in general, of similar characters with himself, he has remained unsettled in his morals, while the uneasiness of his mind has laid him under a kind of necessity to seek relief in the most dissipated scenes; till at length, by a fatal habit,

habit, thought is become insupportable to him, and his life is spent in fruitless efforts to vary those pleasures which a frequent repetition has rendered insipid. He is indefatigable in his pursuits, and will not endure the slightest opposition. His exalted genius, his affluence, and his distinguished rank, give him an ascendancy over the minds and fortunes of men, which is directed indiscriminately by the impulse of passion, to the happiness or prejudice of his fellow-creatures.”—

“From the remembrance of this conversation,” continued Albert, “I lament that the fair Margarita should be exposed to those dangers, which I was warned to avoid.

“The Prince,” he added, “still retains so large a share of my good-will, that I expose his errors with regret. But I feel
anxieties

anxieties on your account, which were never before known to me."

"I am fully sensible," she replied, "of your kind solicitude ; and yet, I trust, that your fears are without foundation. Fortune has placed us in situations so remote, that the few civilities which have passed between the families can never be improved into intimacy."

"Ah, Mademoiselle !" exclaimed Albert, "this freedom from anxiety excites my apprehensions in a painful degree. The Duke contemns the mean pride of birth. He can see and admire those beauties which bloom in a humble sphere ; he can appreciate those virtues which he would glory to pervert."

Here he paused for an instant, and then, as if having taken some sudden resolution, he thus proceeded :—

“ I will relate an event,” he said, “ which will at once disclose the character of the Duke to your view, and convince you of his obduracy to every sentiment of remorse ; confiding in your discretion not to reveal unnecessarily what I shall impart to you in confidence. And yet,” he added, “ I have undertaken a task which I shall find it difficult to perform. This story is so involved in obscurity, and of a nature so wonderful, that it could scarcely have obtained credit had not the Prince himself, when depressed by illness, confessed the fact before several witnesses ; and as the tale had been related in a confused manner by Arnould, a confidential servant of the Prince, on his death-bed, it’s truth can no longer be disputed. After an evening spent with festive gaiety at Ormund Cassel, the Prince had withdrawn

drawn to his own apartment at a late hour. Arnould slept on a pallet, at the foot of the alcove, in which his Lord's bed was placed.

“It was still the dead of night. The Prince, as the story is related, had not closed his eyes to sleep—the sound of the choral song still vibrated in his ear, and his heart beat with the prospect of new and varying delights; a taper burned on a table in the centre of the chamber; the filken hangings were slowly elevated, and an elegant female form was visible at the foot of the bed.

“Who art thou?” said the Prince, arising gaily from his pillow, and instantaneously shrinking back with horror. Her faded and sunk features were those of no inhabitant of earth—the lady whom

they faintly represented, had long taken leave of this world.—

“Castel Nuovo,” she said, in a deep and solemn tone, “thou canst not have forgotten me : my fate, in thy last hours, will, I fear, hang heavy on thy soul. I was innocent—by thee was I perverted—the hour of repentance is past—is gone, never more to be recalled—gloom and endless misery are my lot—my soul is doomed to eternal tortures. — Oh thou once loved companion of my guilt ! profit by the warning Heaven has, in pity, accorded thee. It would severely aggravate my woes to see thee fallen into that abyss of horror, from which eternal penitence can never liberate me.”—

“She elevated her sunk and hollow eyes; she waved her pale hand over the bed; the

the curtain dropped ; she glanced beside the taper, and was seen no more."

"It was undoubtedly," replied Margarita, "a phantom—the creation of a guilty conscience, or disturbed imagination."

"It is impossible," resumed Albert, "that two persons should be thus deceived. Arnould, who, as well as the Prince, beheld the figure, probably knew more circumstances relating to it than he would confess.

"He acknowledged that the name of the lady whom it resembled was known to him, and expressed some apprehension lest her attachment to the Prince was the indirect cause of her death in the prime of life."

"Alas !" said Margarita, "to whatever this appearance may be attributed, I
should

should have hoped that it would have had a salutary effect on the Prince."

"As this is a subject," resumed Albert, "which is seldom alluded to by any of the Prince's friends, the little knowledge I have acquired of what afterwards took place, is by accidental means, and consequently confused.

"The Prince has, for some years past, resided much at his Italian villas, and rarely visited Ormund Cassel. It has, however, been remarked, that he is of late become more thoughtful, and, upon the whole, has conducted himself with more decorum."

Margarita remained for some moments silent.

"If the character which you have drawn of the Prince is just," she at length said, "his society, notwithstanding his
engaging

engaging manners, ought to be shunned by all those who have any regard for virtue."

"Ah! Madam," said Albert smiling, "you are still a stranger, I perceive, to the fascinating powers of wealth and distinction. My guardian and benefactor, the Marquis Ulderic, at this very time solicits an alliance with the Prince for his daughter, the Lady Frederica."

"Is it possible," exclaimed Margarita, "that he should be so regardless of the happiness of his child?"

Albert made no reply, but seemed to be lost in thought. A momentary silence ensued, which Margarita at length interrupted, by asking him if he was acquainted with the sister of the Prince.

The eyes of Albert instantly became animated.

"The

“The Princess Claudia,” he said, “being early deprived of her parents, was educated in the family of the Marquis Ulderic, where I became the companion of her childhood, and in her society enjoyed some of the happiest hours of my youth. The beauty of her figure is not her only excellence; her mind, although not highly cultivated, is capable of the most virtuous impressions.”

He would have proceeded in his commendations of the Princess with all his natural impetuosity, when suddenly recollecting himself, and perceiving that Margarita looked earnestly at him —

“Do not imagine,” he added, “that I should ever forget the distance at which Fortune has placed us. I retain for the illustrious companion of my childhood
that

that affection only which is due from a brother to a sister."

The entrance of the Canon and Christina relieved Margarita from the confusion into which she was thrown by the latter part of this speech. The Canon received the pupil of his venerable friend with a paternal affection, and inquired with much solicitude concerning his welfare.

The ingenuous youth related every event which had taken place since he had resided at Lintz, not concealing even his few errors. He lamented that he must leave Vienna that very evening, but expressed a hope that his regiment would in a few months be stationed at that city. The smile that animated the countenance of Margarita betrayed the pleasure with which this information had inspired her.

While

While Albert enjoyed the society of the friends he loved, the day passed rapidly away, and the shades of evening reminded him of their approaching separation. The gaiety, which had lately animated his countenance, gradually faded away. His eyes were often fixed on Margarita, and he became absorbed in a train of painful thoughts, from which he was recalled by the Canon, who, in terms of the sincerest affection, spoke of their future meeting, and assured him, that while he continued amiable and candid, as he then was, he should ever find a father in him.

The heart of Albert glowed with gratitude to his venerable friend; and when he led Margarita to the coach which was to convey her to Ormund Cassel, the hopes of a speedy return would have softened

softened the pains of separation, had not the intended visit to the Palace of Castel Nuovo filled his mind with various apprehensions.

As the coach moved slowly through the streets of Vienna, and over the highways, now roughened and rendered difficult by the severity of the weather, Margarita revolved, with blended pain and pleasure, the events of the day. Her mind was deeply impressed with the mysterious tale which Albert had related, and she approached Ormund Cassel with a degree of superstitious awe, which she in vain endeavoured to suppress.

At the distance of one league from Vienna, they entered an avenue of pines, which excluded each gleam of light from the moon, riding amid the fleckered clouds. The rattling of wheels and the
clamour

clamour of voices every instant became more distinct, and the stately domes of the palace soon disclosed themselves to view.

As the coach drove beneath the sculptured portal, the heart of Margarita beat with various emotions of fear and anxiety, which she found the more oppressive from not being able to communicate them to her friends, without betraying the confidence of Albert. She followed Christina and the Canon in silence into a superb hall, surrounded by pillars of white marble, which supported a dome highly embossed, and enriched with paintings, representing the graceful figures of antiquity. Here the agitated mind of Margarita was soothed by music, faintly heard.

The

The folding doors were opened at the upper end of the hall, where, from a marble portico, a scene of the most striking beauty presented itself. At the foot of a smooth and extensive lawn appeared the Danube, on whose frozen surface was erected a light pavilion, resembling a temple of the Corinthian order. The golden leaves of the capital reflected the rays of various coloured lamps, which so thickly studded the fluted columns, that they represented pillars of sapphire, emerald, and ruby.

The Danube was covered, as far as the eye could penetrate, with sledges of various forms, according to the taste of the country, moving swiftly over the glossy surface of the ice.

As Margarita assisted the Canon to descend the steps of the portico, she distinguished

tinguished amid the motley group, the shaggy bulk of the northern bear, forming a striking contrast with the tall ostrich: the lights gleamed on the tawny hide of the lion; and the swan, moving swiftly her graceful form, pursued the tract of the mighty bull.

Bernardo smiled:—from the smiles of her adopted father Margarita had been accustomed to derive her highest pleasure; at that moment she felt herself unusually cheered by them. Her mind, possessing all the elasticity of youth, suggested various consoling reflections to her. She imagined that Albert's anxiety for her had induced him to represent the character of the Duke in the darkest colours of which it was capable; and she felt persuaded, that while she continued under the guardianship of the
friends

friends of her infancy, she had nothing to fear.

As they traversed the lawn, the trees, which fringed the banks of the Danube, reflecting from their icy boughs the rays of the lamps, reminded the Canon of the groves of diamond and topaz, amid whose luxurious recesses arises the palace of the magician, according to the wild fictions of oriental poets. This gay and sparkling scene was finely contrasted with the serene light which the moon shed on the opposite shores of the river, and the distant hills, amongst which Bernardo imagined was the village of Ermengarda.

The ice around the pavilion was strewn with rushes. As they drew near it, the sound of delightful music seemed to inspire every heart with ecstasy. The silken hangings, which concealed the entrance,

trance, were elevated, and a display of objects, at once most beautiful and captivating to the youthful mind, presented itself to the view of Margarita. The pavilion contained a suite of apartments, separated by light festoons of India silk, fastened by cords of gold; chandeliers of the same metal were suspended from the ceiling; the floor was covered with embroidered carpets, and the most celebrated artists had exerted their skill to decorate the walls.

The air was perfumed with the aromatic flowers of Sicily or Calabria; and numerous gay and beautiful figures flitted before the eye.

In some of these apartments the airy group wove the light dance; in others, they listened to the melting strains of harmony,

harmony, and each pursued the wild suggestion of a youthful fancy.

The novelty of the scene effaced every painful impression from the mind of Margarita; and while Christina kindly participated the pleasure of her child, Bernardo gazed around with delight, and his eyes sparkled with a joy, which the benevolent only can taste.

As they entered the inmost apartment of the pavilion, which excelled every other in the magnificence of its decorations, the Prince del Castel Nuovo instantly attracted their attention.

The brightest gems of the east sparkled amid his empurpled robes, and the richest perfumes were scattered in his hair; his features glowed with unusual beauty, and his eyes were animated with the smile of condescension. Beside him stood a lady, whom Margarita afterwards found to be

the daughter of the Marquis Ulderic. Wild were the glances of her eyes; haughty and ungoverned passions were expressed in each fine proportioned feature. The admiration she excited was blended with fear; and contempt too evidently distorted her rosy lip, as she beheld Bernardo supported by his adopted daughter.

While the eyes of Margarita were still fixed upon the Lady Frederica, she was accosted by the young Marquis Ulderic, and Ernulphus Gesner at the same moment approached the Canon.

She expressed some surprise at seeing them, and asked Henry how long he had been in the neighbourhood of Vienna.

"A few hours only are elapsed," he replied, "since we reached the palace of Ormund; and nothing," he added, "but the assurance that I should see Canon Bernardo and his family this evening,

should have withheld me from availing myself of that interval to have visited the Canonry."

Margarita lamented that Albert's hasty return to Lintz would deprive him of the pleasure of seeing his friend.

The young Marquis spoke in terms of the warmest affection of his beloved Albert, and expressed a hope that a separation which had been so painful to both, might prove beneficial to his friend.

The approach of the Prince at that moment interrupted their conversation. He welcomed the Canon and his sister to Ormund Cassel with an air of the utmost courtesy, addressing in a lower tone to the former some high encomiums on his lovely child.

The good Bernardo smiled, and his sparkling eye disclosed the joy which these praises imparted to his unsuspecting soul.

“Would to Heaven,” he exclaimed, yielding to the transports which agitated his grateful heart, “that none were endowed with riches but those, who, like the Prince del Castel Nuovo, would employ them in promoting the happiness, and cultivating the finer affections of mankind !”

The Duke gave his hand gaily to the Canon, and having commended him to the particular attention of his chaplain, he addressed Margarita, and assured her, with an air infinitely flattering and insinuating, that her presence was the fairest ornament of the assembly. She smiled, but made no reply.

“You have always resided at Vienna, Madam ?” said the Duke, assuming a more serious aspect ; “you are probably related to the family of Canon Bernardo ?”

“Although

“Although I have never known another home than the Canonry,” replied Margarita, “yet I have no pretensions to the benefits which have been there bestowed on me.”

“In a world where the favours of Fortune are not distributed according to merit,” replied the Prince, “you were peculiarly happy in being placed under the protection of Canon Bernardo. He is possessed of no common share of excellencies; his every look and every action bespeak him one who practises each virtuous precept which he inculcates; and while he himself is faultless, he can pardon the errors of others.”

The praises of the Canon were never more grateful to Margarita than when they flowed from the lips of the Prince, who, from his inattention to his own con-

duct, she imagined would not discern any slight degree of merit in another. Her eyes were fixed on the ground, and the sweetest smiles dimpled her glowing cheeks. The Prince observed the satisfaction which was expressed in her animated countenance, and availing himself of that favourable moment, ventured, by an artful turn, to change the object of his encomiums. He no longer expatiated on the merits of the Canon, but on the pleasure which this excellent man must derive from the society of his daughter, from whose numerous excellencies, and valuable acquirements, he had already received the more than adequate reward of his cares.

“Young ladies,” replied Margarita, in an emphatic manner, “have few incentives to exertion, if improvements
and

and excellencies are attributed to them, to which they may not have the slightest pretensions."

"Had I been guilty of an error," said the Duke, smiling, "I should have gloried in receiving a reproof from the lips of the gentle Margarita. But in this instance," he added, "I merit not her censures; my judgment has not been formed without sufficient proof."

"The lovely Margarita cannot be ignorant, that an improved and intelligent mind gives a new expression to every feature, irradiates every glance of the eye, and animates each smile."

And before she was prepared to make any reply, he seized her hand, and entreated her permission to conduct her to his sister.

The young Marquis followed the Duke, but remained silent, and evidently thoughtful. The Princess received Margarita with a faint smile, and having slightly welcomed her to the palace, she turned aside to accost a young cavalier, who lay extended on a damask sofa beside her. The Lady Frederica, to whom Margarita had been presented by her brother, scarcely condescended to speak to her, but soon after complained of extreme weariness, and withdrew.

The haughty demeanour of the young ladies did not escape the observation of the Prince, who, endeavouring to efface the unpleasant impression which it might have left on the mind of Margarita, exerted every power to amuse her; the scene each moment became more gay, and the music more animated. Several
elegant

elegant female figures, making their way through the crowd, presented a beautiful ballette to the Prince, and his guests. Their airy forms were decked with folds of silver gauze, and their waving tresses were collected by knots of starry gems; their bounding steps, and the animated glances of their eyes, seemed to court general admiration, and the light fabric trembled with universal applause.

They ceased, and approached the Princess, who received them with the most gracious smiles of approbation. The Duke addressed each fair dancer in Italian; and their well-known titles discovered them to be of the noblest families of Italy.

The conversation now became general; the Princess herself seemed to be roused from her state of inactivity, and the wild laugh burst from every lip.

Astonishment was depicted on the countenance of the fair and innocent inhabitant of the Canonry. She looked around for her former protectors, and blamed herself for having been induced to leave them.

“Whom would you seek?” said Henry, who had observed her uneasiness. “Is there any thing, Mademoiselle, in which I can be of service to you?”—His countenance, as he spoke, was unusually thoughtful; the lines of displeasure were even traced on his serene and manly features.

Margarita felt the silent reproof, which she thought was conveyed in the serious air of the lately smiling Henry. “You think that I have been guilty of an error, my Lord?” she said, anxious to regain his

his good opinion; "I should not have left my friends."

"I hope," replied the young Marquis, smiling, "that the fair Margarita is still surrounded by friends; but if she wishes to rejoin the Canon, I will this moment go in quest of him."

During the absence of Henry, the Prince again addressed Margarita.

"Mademoiselle," he said, in a low voice, "I presume that the scene which you have lately witnessed, did not meet with your approbation?"

"So much grace and beauty, my Lord," she replied, "could scarcely fail of exciting admiration."

"Yes," added the Prince, drawing Margarita imperceptibly from his sister, and her train, "they may excite a momentary admiration; but beauty, when

consisting merely of fine proportioned features, or a graceful form, can never deeply impress the heart; it is only irresistible when animated by sense, and refined by virtue, and when the mean and selfish love of admiration is lost in the more noble and benevolent wish of imparting pleasure."

"If such is the case," replied Margarita, "it is to be lamented that so many ladies should be subjected to an error, equally prejudicial to their own dignity and happiness, and that the conduct of those whose favour they solicit, should tend to heighten the fatal delusion."

"Would it not be unjust," answered the Prince, with a smile of gaiety, "if, after having sacrificed their whole lives to the attainment of one object, they

should be denied the trifling reward of their exertions? To be fair is their pride; and to acquire those powers which may enable them to sport away a few gay hours, is the height of their ambition. They have attained their end; we allow them to be attractive, and when we would wish to unbend our minds in thoughtless levity, it is to their society that we repair. But," proceeded the Duke, "however important the sacrifice may be which these fair ladies have made for us, courtesy never can prevail upon us to grant them an adequate requital. Modesty, gentleness, and every noble talent with which Nature has endowed the female mind, are often lost, or perverted in acquiring those attractions, whose reward is the adulation of a few careless and fleeting hours. It is only at the feet of
her,

her, whose unassuming virtues have elevated her far above our own standard, that we should resign our lives and fortunes! To her we would confide our sorrows, and from her society we should derive the sweetest consolation, when the bloom of youth fades from the cheek, and we descend into the shadowy vale of years."

The Prince paused, and looked earnestly upon Margarita, who, changing colour several times, was scarcely able to reply: her heart dictated an answer, which she feared might be severe; while the smiles of the Prince, the ingenuousness of his air, and the earnestness with which he had commended virtue, urged her to suppress the remark which she would otherwise have made upon this occasion.

The

The young Marquis did not return; the Canon and Christina did not appear; and the Duke still continued to converse with Margarita. He led her through the various apartments of the pavilion, he presented to her the choicest viands, he pointed out every surrounding beauty, and wished her to partake every pleasure which offered itself. His manners were infinitely engaging, and the most refined courtesy was apparent in his attention to the lovely orphan.

Margarita, however, became every instant more uneasy in not seeing the Canon and his sister. She wondered that friends so kindly attentive as they were accustomed to be, should leave her with strangers. The supercilious neglect of the Princess threw her inevitably under the protection of the Duke; and remembering

bering the character which Albert had drawn of him, a deeply implanted love of virtue inspired her with a wish to avoid the society of a person, whom she found but too well skilled in the arts of pleasing.

CHAP.

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FROM this state of anxiety Margarita was relieved by the return of the young Marquis, who informed her, that Christina had been obliged, by indisposition, to leave the pavilion.

“I would advise you, Mademoiselle,” he said, in a lower tone, “to accompany her immediately to Vienna; she is not accustomed to be absent from home, and will probably find herself better in the tranquillity of her own house.”

“It

“It is not with your usual prudence, my Lord,” interrupted the Prince, somewhat hastily, “that you have imparted this news to the young lady.

“Mademoiselle,” he added, “the colour fades from your cheek;—be assured that I will not allow your excellent friend to leave my walls till her health is perfectly re-established. She shall not want any relief which the palace of Ormund will afford; and with so kind a nurse as the lovely Margarita, sickness must lose all its pains!”

In uttering these words, he reluctantly delivered her to Henry, to lead her to the palace.

From the marble hall through which she had before passed, Margarita was conducted by a magnificent flight of stone
stairs

stairs into an extensive gallery, illumined by waxen tapers, in crystal sockets.

At the door of a suite of apartments, situate at the farther end of the gallery, the young Marquis bade her adieu, and retired. In an anti-chamber, by a blazing fire, sat the good Canon; he was in a musing posture, yet a faint and placid smile rested on his lips.

When Margarita appeared, he expressed his sorrow that she should have absented herself from the scene of gaiety so befitting her age.

"I had hoped," he said, "that by remaining near my sister, I should have rendered your presence unnecessary."

The tear trembled in the eye of Margarita, as she thanked her adopted father for his intended kindness, and anxiously inquired after the health of Christina.

"Her's

“Her’s is but a slight indisposition; my child,” replied the Canon, “occasioned by the hurry of the day: a few hours’ repose will probably restore her health.”

Margarita being informed that she was in an inner chamber, gently opened the door, and advanced to the foot of the bed. As she raised the filken hangings, she found that Christina had fallen into a refreshing sleep. She placed her taper on a table, and sat down beside the bed.

The sound of the far distant music was faintly heard amid the breezes of the night.

Margarita contemplated the events of the day with a temperament of mind, in which melancholy was most predominant. Human Nature now, for the first time, began to unfold it’s defects to her; she
perceived

perceived that gaiety was distinct from happiness, and that the highest endowments of Nature were frequently perverted to promote the cause of vice.

The moon was set behind the western hills, and the morning light faintly streaked the horizon, when the company, which were assembled at the gala, began to disperse. Some of the more noble guests remained at the palace, while the others returned to Vienna.

A billet had been brought some time before from the Prince, requesting the Canon, in the most friendly and flattering terms, to remain a few days at the palace, at the same time lamenting the indisposition of his sister.

Margarita, when asked by the Canon whether he should accept the hospitable offers of the Prince, continued silent and irresolute.

irresolute. It was her most earnest wish to avoid his society—a wish which she however concealed, lest Christina should be induced to return to Vienna at the hazard of her health; and the Canon, giving a favourable interpretation to her silence, hastened to assure the Prince that he accepted with gratitude his kind and condescending invitation.

When Margarita retired to the apartment which had been provided for her, her repose was not, as usual, undisturbed. She experienced those uneasy sensations, which a commerce with the world too frequently excites in the inexperienced breast.

The succeeding day was far advanced when she revisited Christina, whom she found still unable to leave her chamber.

Christina observed the change which
a want

a want of rest had made in the lately blooming cheeks of Margarita.

“My daughter,” she said, as she embraced her, “I fear that you have been anxious on my account; but I thank Heaven I am already so much recovered, that I hope soon to be able to return to the Canonry.”

Margarita remained with Christina till she was summoned to the morning’s repast.

In the saloon, to which she was conducted, every elegance, and every luxury, seemed to have been collected. The apartment was of a circular form, and its concave roof, enriched with golden embossments, was supported by pillars of Parian marble. The windows, descending to the ground, were filled with aromatic plants, exhaling their rich perfumes

fumes in the air. A lawn extended itself before the palace, whose fringed skirts were half concealed by the heavy mist hanging on the high woods which encircled it. The cold air was mellowed into the mildest temperature by numerous stoves, while the velvet hangings excluded each penetrating blast. Here the gay assembly partook of the choicest dainties, the produce of distant climates. The fertile vales of Florence had yielded the purple clusters of the vine, and the honey of Parma was contained in Indian vases.

The Princess coolly inclined her head when Margarita appeared, and a blush of confusion and displeasure tinged each feature when the fair orphan was placed beside her by her courteous brother.

Here

Here Margarita became witness a second time to that levity of manners which had so greatly displeased her on the preceding evening. Amid the gay scene no one seemed thoughtful but the young Marquis, whose unaffected silence sufficiently disclosed his disapprobation of the conduct of his companions.

The Princess paid few attentions to her guests, while in every action and every look she displayed an indolence and abstraction of mind, which she seemed to have no wish to subdue.

She reclined upon a sofa. A hood of white gauze half concealed her face and her flowing hair, and a sweet, yet languid, smile sometimes enlivened her beautiful features.

“ You have seen Signor Albert ? ” she said, addressing herself to Margarita, in

Italian, and gazing on a young cavalier, who presented her with a citron; "and do you not agree with me, that the disadvantages of a humble birth are fully compensated in him by the numerous excellencies with which Nature has endowed him? So animated is his countenance, so engaging are his manners, and so dignified his air, that in his presence every other cavalier seems dull and uninteresting."

"The Princess del Castel Nuovo," replied Margarita, "is perhaps not wholly conscious of the extent of the compliment she has paid Signor Albert."

Claudia made no reply; her attention seemed to be already directed to some new object. She glanced carelessly around, and again fixed her eyes upon the cavalier,

valier, whose countenance betrayed some emotions of confusion.

Margarita observed this strange conduct of the Princess with pity and astonishment; and she asked herself whether an elevated station could, in any degree, license a deviation from the established rules of delicacy and propriety?

While these reflections occupied her mind, the Prince, perceiving that she remained silent and thoughtful, endeavoured to amuse her, by conversing on those topics, in which he imagined she would be most interested. During this conversation the eyes of Frederica were fixed alternately on the Prince and Margarita; and when by chance they met those of the latter, the colour rose in her cheek, and every glance was expressive of invidious jealousy.

Margarita, who was too penetrating not to discover it's cause, trembled to find herself the object of hatred. She excused herself as soon as possible from the company, and passing swiftly through the hall, descended through the marble portico into the pleasure ground, wishing to conceal her agitation from every observer.

A sweep of ice-encrusted lawns, interspersed by numerous trees and leafless shrubs, extended to the banks of the Danube. The clouds, heavy with fleet, hung in the mid-air, and sailing before the rude blast, rolled around the summits of the distant hills. The sun rode pale and wan in the misty heavens; it's expanded orb was dimly seen where two vast clouds were severed by the wind. The cliff of Ermengarda for a moment was visible,

visible, and again it's beaked summit was involved in mist.

As Margarita, from the terrace beneath the walls of the palace, contemplated the noble images which Nature unfolded to her view, she for a moment became insensible to the cold blast, and forgot the uneasy sensations which she had recently experienced.

Her attention was soon, however, recalled to her present situation by the sound of several voices; a range of windows, descending to the floors of the apartments, opened upon the terrace. One of these was suddenly unclosed, and the daughter of the Marquis Ulderic appeared; her dark hair shaded her lofty brow, and her white robes floated in the blast, as she struggled to disengage her hand from her brother, who still continuing to detain it,

seemed, by the mild, yet earnest expression of his countenance, and by the persuasive manner in which he spoke, to endeavour to subdue the fierce passions which but too evidently raged within her breast.

“Address not to me the words of comfort,” she replied, in an elevated tone.

“No, Henry, you cannot assuage my grief; you know not how cruelly my pride is wounded; you know not the anguish with which this heart is rent; I am miserable—yes, completely miserable!”

“Oh Frederica! my sister!” he replied, as he pressed her hand within his, “would to Heaven your sorrows were such as a brother’s love might alleviate! Impart them, I beseech you, to your Henry, and confide in his affection.”

“It

“It is from the fair Margarita,” she exclaimed, fixing her eyes upon her, as she withdrew towards the gates of the palace, “it is from the lovely orphan that you must seek the occasion of my affliction. Stay, enchanting maiden,” she added, in a taunting and contemptuous tone, “the daughter of the Marquis Ulderic would know of thee what are those insinuating wiles by which thou hast beguiled every heart, and humbled thy superiors to an equality with thyself?”

Margarita changed colour; but was prevented from making any reply by the young Marquis addressing his sister with a serious air—

“I had hoped,” he said, “that you contemned the mean pride of birth, and that the generous soul of my sister would acknowledge and revere the excellencies

of those, who in rank only are her inferiors."

In uttering these words, the noble youth approached Margarita; and taking her hand, "Pardon, Mademoiselle," he said, "the impatience of my sister. Her unprovoked anger will, I am persuaded, be transient as your resentment."

"It is then past," she replied, "and I may once more hope for the favour of the Lady Frederica."

"It is easy for the offender to forgive," returned Frederica haughtily; "Margarita may pity the distresses of the daughter of Ulderic, while she glories in the occasion of them."

"Would to Heaven," said the young Marquis, "that female delicacy would repress these tumults, and terminate these vain contentions!"

"Vain

“Vain contentions!” she repeated:
“What! shall I meanly submit to see another alienate that heart which I once could proudly call my own? Shall I unite with the servile croud to court the smiles of an ignoble orphan? Shall I take my hated rival to my bosom, and glory in those excellencies which have occasioned my misery?”

While Frederica, glowing with indignation, and agitated with passion, continued to reproach Margarita, the Duke, advancing from the interior of the palace, stepped out upon the terrace, and catching the last words of the incensed lady, seized her hand, and sunk upon his knees before her.

“Is it in deploring the infidelity of some highly favoured youth,” he exclaimed, “that the melodious voice of

the lovely Frederica is agitated with grief, that the tear obscures her radiant eye, and the colour mantles in her cheek? If she has reason to complain of inconstancy, who shall presume to hope?"

Here he paused, and elevated his expressive eyes towards her with an arch, yet fascinating smile.

"Ah, Frederica!" he added, "you know not your own excellencies; you are not sensible of the attractions of which you are possessed. If the wild violet scatters a fragrance which entrances every sense, shall it bloom less sweetly beneath the hand of the cultivator? — If beauty unadorned, and owing to simple Nature all her charms, is able to excite an admiration which can terminate but with life, shall the high-born daughter of the Marquis Ulderic, whose native charms

are heightened by every acquired grace, despair of fixing a heart, although wavering and inconstant as the blast which drifts the mountain snow?"

These words, spoken in a gay, yet impassioned tone, seemed for a time to quell the tumults which agitated her breast.

The triumphant smile played upon her rosy lip, and her eye sparkled with delight, as she gazed upon her unpresuming rival.

The Prince arose: loud and joyful music was heard at that instant issuing from beneath the marble portals of the palace. He took the hand of each lady, and smilingly addressing them —

"I will no longer allow you," he said, "to expose yourselves to the boisterous gale; but, obeying the voice of harmony,

we will seek gayer regions, and brighter scenes."

While pursuing the various pleasures which the Prince had prepared for his guests, the Lady Frederica still retained the illusion which the artful address of Castel Nuovo had been intended to create; but in the hour of retirement and reflection it faded from her view, and she found that another interpretation might be given to this speech, less soothing to her pride, and less healing to her wounded heart.

Margarita withdrew to her chamber, not indeed to enjoy the sweet tranquillity of her own thoughts, but to calm her agitated spirits. She ever had been, and still continued to be, exempt from the fierce passions which disturbed the mind of Frederica; but she found that she could

not witness them in another, without partaking, in some degree, their baleful effects. While she was thus employed, she was called to the banquet.

The company were assembled in an extensive hall, from whose lofty windows the mellow tints of the declining sun were excluded by hangings of velvet, embroidered with the purple amaranth. From the ceiling were suspended chandeliers of burnished gold, and the same metal sparkled in the texture of the Indian carpet. Here the loud rushing of the winter's wind was faintly heard, or lost entirely in the voice of merriment.

The Prince again shone conspicuous with all those powers of pleasing with which an exalted genius, and a consciousness of his own excellencies, had endowed him. Yet, while courtesy taught him to
reverence

reverence his inferiors, the dignity of his manner made them sensible that he condescended.

The gaiety of this assembly was not restrained by reason; and the licentious principles which sometimes proceeded from the lips of the cavaliers, were couched in terms so delicate, and uttered in a style so graceful, that to the most virtuous ear they were no longer disgusting; and Margarita was obliged to recal to mind those sacred truths which her preceptors had inculcated as a criterion by which to judge of their atrocity.

Canon Bernardo, as usual, knew but little of what passed, or saw only what was commendable in each of his companions. He conversed much with his friend Ernulphus, and ate his temperate meal as if he were still at the Canonry.

The

The Prince frequently addressed him, and led him to describe some of those scenes, to which he had been witness in the Court of Leo, where he had spent many of his younger days. Bernardo was gratified by the polite attentions of the Prince, and his satisfaction was participated by Margarita.

In the meantime the eyes of Frederica were constantly fixed upon Castel Nuovo, and she found occasion of suspicion and resentment in each mark of esteem shewn by him to the venerable protector of her hated rival.

After the banquet, the company withdrew to another suite of apartments, where every pleasure was assembled which could delight the eye, or captivate the fancy. The song, the dance, the mask, and even the diversions of the theatre, were not omitted.

omitted. In this gay and diversified scene, all restraint was laid aside, while each pursued the dictates of his own caprice.

Margarita would willingly have partaken the joy which sparkled in every eye, and suffused an animated bloom over every countenance; but there was a bold familiarity in the air of her companions, and a freedom of manner, which disgusted and even terrified her, and in proportion as the spirits of others rose, her's became depressed.

She eluded the observation of the Prince, and, retiring to the most unfrequented of the apartments, where the distant murmurs of the harp were but faintly heard, she threw herself upon a sofa, and yielded to the melancholy reflections which intruded upon her mind.

While

While she was thus engaged, Frederica entered the apartment, and approaching her —

“Mademoiselle,” she said, “you are pensive ; some painful thought I fear disturbs you.”

“If I am pensive,” replied Margarita, “it is without a cause : this gay scene is but ill calculated to inspire melancholy reflection.”

“When there is no inward sorrow,” said Frederica, throwing herself carelessly on the sofa by Margarita, “these gaieties may have some charms ; but, Oh ! what pleasures can blunt the edge of disappointment ? What delights can sooth the torments inflicted by injured love, humbled pride, and confidence betrayed ?”

“By

“By the favour of Heaven,” replied Margarita, “I have been spared those afflictions of which the Lady Frederica speaks; and I must perhaps attribute my indifference to these amusements, to having been little accustomed to them.”

“Ah! do not think to deceive me with that air of innocence, Margarita,” replied Frederica. “Novelty was never yet known to diminish the relish of pleasure. But allow me to give another interpretation to that melancholy. You are entangled in a maze, from whose difficult windings you are unable to extricate yourself; and the fate which awaits you will be like that of many ladies, lovely as yourself, who have trod before you the same flowery path.”

“I imagine,” returned Margarita, “that the Lady Frederica can explain her
words,

words, which are at present wholly inexplicable to me."

"Would you wish me to speak in more express terms?" asked Frederica, with a sarcastic smile. "Remember that when you have been warned of your danger, you will no longer have it in your power to attribute your future misery to the hardness of your fate."

"I hope," replied Margarita, "that I never should be induced to pursue any line of conduct which I had been warned to avoid as dangerous to my peace; I beseech you, therefore, Madam, to forewarn me of any evil I am likely to incur, and the gratitude of her, whom your goodness may have preserved, shall be your reward."

"Must I then inform Margarita," resumed Frederica, "that at this moment
she

she is encircled by dangers, and that the peace of her mind, if not already lost, will soon be irrecoverably destroyed? How shall she, who is in a manner friendless, fix the affections, and direct the wayward will of a haughty unfeeling Prince, to whom it is a sport to break those hearts which his insinuating wiles have won?

“Obedient to the commands of my father,” she continued, “I received the addresses of Castel Nuovo; my vanity was flattered by his captivating attentions, but my heart abhorred a wretch, whose transient love is directed to the meanest objects—whom neither respect for my rank, scarcely inferior to his own, nor the fear of my father’s resentment, could induce to preserve that faith which he owed to me.

“If

“If such has been the fate of the daughter of Ulderic,” she added, “shall Margarita, an unprotected orphan, presume to hope? Shall she, however lovely, subdue him, whose inconstancy the noblest ladies have had reason to deplore — who trifles with the peace of all that are fair, and triumphs in the anguish of the innocent and helpless? Margarita, beware of your danger; be not allured by his engaging smiles, his honied words, his animated glances; think not, fair maiden, to elevate yourself to that exalted state to which so many have aspired in vain; ’tis a dangerous summit, from which one false step shall precipitate you to inevitable destruction.

“Ah! plead not to me that the Prince is indifferent to you,” she continued, interrupting Margarita, who was beginning

to

to speak ; “boast not yourself of a force of mind which none can attain—this vain security will be your ruin. Fly, fly the danger, and be Castel Nuovo banished for ever from your thoughts.

“I foresee,” continued the daughter of the Marquis, in a more plaintive tone, “that your fate will resemble that of the unknown lady, who fell a sacrifice to the cruel neglect of the Prince. He won her heart—she was devoted wholly to him—she lived but in him, and in his neglect she found a termination to her existence ! Ah ! you change colour ; the tale is known to you, and yet the virtuous Margarita could smile on the perpetrator of this horrid act !”

Margarita sighed ; she could scarcely deny the charge ; and she found it no diminution of her error that Frederica had

had accused her of what she was herself more eminently guilty. While the answer she would have made still faltered on her lips, Frederica seized her arm; her eyes were wild with the passions which laboured within her breast.

“Margarita!” she exclaimed, “I will disclose to you what shall make the blood curdle in your veins—what shall compel you to hate the barbarous Castel Nuovo!”

Margarita, feebly resisting, was led by the impetuous daughter of the Marquis Ulderic through the great hall. They ascended the stairs, and traversed the gallery.

“I will take you,” replied Frederica, to the earnest inquiries of Margarita, “where you shall learn to detest him you now hold dear.”

At

At a lofty door of cedar, near the centre of the gallery, they stopped.

“You tremble, you are pale—faint-hearted girl!” she said; “all is silent around us; no penetrating eye shall discover what we do.”

From the folds of her robe she drew a massive key; the rusty lock yielded to her efforts. She took a waxen taper from its crystal socket; she burst open the harsh grating door, and drawing her reluctant companion after her, rushed into a gloomy and apparently long deserted chamber.

“’Twas here, ’twas here,” exclaimed Frederica, closing the door of the apartment, “that Castel Nuovo beheld the fearful vision. The lamp burns dimly in the damp air; the mouldering vestiges of former magnificence, the tattered hangings,

hangings, and broken casements, declare the mysterious horrors of this place to be such as no one hath hitherto dared to investigate."

The awful scene affected even the innocent heart of Margarita; as she fearfully glanced around, she supplicated Frederica to allow her to return.

"No, no," replied Frederica, "reflect upon the tale you have heard, contemplate each gloomy object, bid your heated imagination depict the tall and meagre form dimly gleaming amid the shades of night—'twas there it wound its trackless steps.

"Margarita," she added, elevating the taper to her pale countenance, "will you, too, court the sad fate of that unhappy lady? Will you, too, hover around the couch of Castel Nuovo, and warn him

of the punishments that await his crimes?"

She started; the glow of passion faded from her cheek.

"What sound is that," she exclaimed as she grasped the hand of Margarita, "which creeps in low murmurs through the deserted chambers? By what hand were the faded hangings of the bed so rudely shaken?"

"It was the rustling of the wind admitted through the broken casement," replied Margarita.

"We will return," said Frederica, whose heart, but lately confiding in its own strength, began to yield to the fearful images which she herself had excited; "our minds are already sufficiently impressed with what are the fatal effects of
fixing

fixing our affections upon those in whose honour we cannot confide."

While, with an air of assumed courage, the daughter of the Marquis Ulderic advanced to open the door of the gallery, the voice of the Prince from without met her ear; her hand fell from the bolt, she became deaf to the pleadings of Margarita, and the dread of meeting the Prince seemed to have overcome every other fear.

For a moment they remained silent—the wind whistled through the vacant chambers; the cypress, which darkened the lofty windows, waved it's spiry head in sad concordance with the breeze.—Margarita had already, in a great measure, overcome her momentary alarm; but as, with cautious step, she advanced farther into the chamber, her mind was impressed

with the deepest melancholy; she elevated the tarnished curtains which hung from the gilded tester; the mouldering texture crumbled in her fingers. A door, leading to an inner apartment, stood half open; the light of the taper, which Frederica held in her trembling hand, was unable to penetrate the gloomy recesses within.

High over the mantle-piece was the full length portrait of a lady, perhaps of her, of whose disastrous fate these mouldering ruins were the last sad vestige. Margarita approached the portrait, and gazed with earnestness upon it.

The wonderful symmetry and fine proportion of the form excited her admiration; but over the once blooming cheeks, the lovely smile, and animated eye, time and long neglect had thrown it's misty veil;

veil; thick drops of damp glistened in the yellow hair, and a sickly dew obscured each well-proportioned feature.

The tear trembled in the eye of Margarita. She returned to the door which led to the gallery; Frederica suffered her to open it. No one was seen without. They quitted together the deserted chamber. The daughter of the Marquis closed the door; she replaced the key amid the folds of her robe, and taking the hand of Margarita, led her to her own apartment.

CHAP. VI.

“IT was from the interest I have taken in your welfare,” said Frederica, clasping the hand of Margarita, “that I have been induced to warn you of your danger, and to impress the consciousness of it more deeply on your mind, by placing this dreadful example directly before you. I have made use of means, which, on another occasion, might not be equally justifiable, to obtain the key of these chambers; I therefore trust in your gratitude,
Margarita,

Margarita, to conceal the events of this evening."

In uttering these words she embraced her, and assured her, that in future she might confide in her friendship.

But her flattering assurances had less influence over Margarita than her reproaches.

"To your friendship, Madam," she replied, "from the great inferiority of my rank, I can have no pretensions: but I should wish to be entitled to your esteem; nor shall I be satisfied while you entertain a prejudice so injurious to my character, as that which you have lately admitted. I was educated in retirement. My hopes are, I trust, moderated by reason, and I have been early taught to know the fatal effects of yielding to passion. Can the Lady Frederica then think

it possible that I should aspire to the favour of the Prince del Castel Nuovo, and sacrifice my peace of mind to an hopeless attachment?"

At that instant the voice of the young Marquis was heard in the gallery, requesting his sister to be allowed admittance into her apartment. Frederica opened the door, and as Henry advanced towards Margarita, he congratulated the young ladies on an intimacy which he hoped might prove reciprocally beneficial.

Frederica made no reply, but allowed her brother to place himself on a sofa beside her.

"How infinitely," said Henry gaily, as he gazed alternately on his young companions, "is the Prince del Castel Nuovo honoured by such visitors!"

"Perhaps,"

"Perhaps," said Frederica, hastily, "were it in your power, you would deny him this honour!"

"I certainly would," returned Henry seriously; "and I confess that it is with deep concern I see my sister and Mademoiselle Margarita in the Palace of Ormund."

A sudden blush suffused the cheek of Margarita, while in Frederica each feature expressed the fierce passions which her brother's declaration had excited within her.

"The Duke," she replied, forgetting what had recently passed between herself and Margarita, "has undoubtedly been guilty of some errors; but who is free from faults? And if we do not exercise mercy and forgiveness, how shall we be entitled to hope for them?"

“Although a spirit of forgiveness is, in itself, peculiarly amiable,” replied Henry, “yet there are some crimes which ought to deter the virtuous from associating with those who have once been capable of them, and who still, by a levity of conduct, betray an inclination towards them.”

Frederica, perceiving that her brother's arguments tended towards the promotion of her own plan with respect to Margarita, allowed him to proceed without farther interruption.

“How frequently,” he said, “do ladies neglect their true interest, and mistake the flattering attentions of those to whom they may perhaps be objects of contempt, for that real approbation which arises from esteem! If they would acquire the dignified character of rational beings,

beings, they would shrink from frivolous scenes of public gaiety, where each aspires to some vain distinction, which debases while it seems to exalt. They would think no pursuits worthy their exertions but those of active virtue, and condemn the adulation of persons whom they cannot revere. They would equally avoid every situation where the imagination might be fired by ambition, or the inexperienced mind misled by arts which it is unable to detect."

In uttering these words, he fixed his eyes upon Margarita.

"How often," he said, "have the graces, acquired by those who move in the higher circles of life, acted as spells to fascinate the youthful mind, and to deprive it of that abhorrence which vice

must inspire when it appears unadorned amid the lower ranks!

“The distance at which our superiors are beheld, the pomp which surrounds them, the bloom of artificial beauty, and the blaze of wealth, invest the gloomy form of vice with bright and resplendent hues;—but, on a nearer approach, the enchantment fades; beauty palls on the familiar eye, and the anguish of conscious guilt renders the present moment spiritless, and involves the future in gloom: vice in every rank of life is equally odious, and equally destructive in its effects.”

Margarita perceived that the latter part of this speech was peculiarly addressed to herself.

“I fear, my Lord,” she replied, with evident confusion, “that some error in
my

my conduct has occasioned this reproof."

"No," returned Henry; "it was because I saw you faultless, fair Margarita, that I wished you to remain so, and ventured to warn you of those dangers with which you are threatened.

"Entreat your unsuspecting guardian to leave the Palace of Ormund, where every attention you receive from the Prince will inspire you with gratitude, and induce you to suppress any emotions of indignation which the levity of his manners might excite. Charity will incline you to dwell upon those many virtues which you will frequently discern in him; his generosity, courage, affability, occasional humanity, and kind participation in the interests of his inferiors, will gradually gain upon your heart; while
each

each day, each hour, his defects will appear less glaring."

Frederica still avoided interrupting her brother, who proceeded to apologize to Margarita for the freedom with which he had spoken his sentiments to her, alledging that on the following day he was under the necessity of leaving the palace.

"To-morrow," he said, "with my tutor I commence a journey to Italy, in which I expected to have been accompanied by the Prince; but a command I received this morning from my father, obliges me to hasten immediately to Rome, where, in a few weeks, I shall be joined by the family of Castel Nuovo. Frederica I would willingly persuade to return to my father's castle."

The young Marquis concluded this conversation by lamenting that it ever
should

should be necessary to dwell upon the errors of the Prince. "I console myself, however, with this reflection," he said, "that there is nothing for which I have ever censured him in his absence, with which I have not charged him, in the plainest terms, in his presence; and it redounds very much to his honour that from these freedoms I have never forfeited that place which I at first held in his favour."

Margarita found it no arduous task to persuade the Canon, who was no longer detained by the indisposition of his sister, to leave the palace. The Duke heard of the Canon's determination with dissatisfaction, but could urge no argument to induce him to stay, in opposition to the wishes of his adopted daughter.

Margarita felt some emotions of sorrow, which she could not wholly suppress, in
bidding

bidding adieu to Henry. She beheld him with glistening eyes as he stood in the marble portico, with his arms folded, and gazing with a dejected air on the coach as it wound around the courts of the palace. His image was present to her during the whole of that day; and when she again beheld the ancient Canonry, while she pursued her former occupations, she was depressed with a degree of melancholy which time only could remove.

During the interval, previous to the Duke's departure for Italy, the Canon was honoured by several visits from him. He frequently requested permission to see Margarita, which Christina refused upon some slight pretext. On the day preceding his intended journey, she however found herself under the necessity of yielding to his earnest entreaties.

When

When Margarita appeared, he received her with a courtesy in which few could equal him: his address was kind, yet respectful. He lamented that he was under the necessity of remaining a considerable length of time in Italy, and expressed a hope that the absence of a few months would not obliterate the remembrance of Castel Nuovo from the minds of his friends at the Canonry.

Bernardo was affected by his interesting manner, and when he bade them adieu, Christina herself could scarcely refuse him the tribute of a sigh: she was, however, resolved to decline any farther intimacy with the Prince, whom she found to possess, in a dangerous degree, the powers of fascination.

The remainder of the winter passed away in calm untroubled joys, which
were

were not a little heightened by the presence of Albert, whose regiment was stationed in the Imperial city, and who counted every hour as lost which was not spent at the Canonry.

The kind attentions of Bernardo and his sister to this amiable youth were amply rewarded by his increasing attachment to them, and the humility with which he received every precept of virtue and prudence inculcated by them. His efforts to please them were unremitting; but it was Margarita whose affection he seemed most solicitous to engage. He had observed the spotless purity of her manners, and for her sake he would shun the society of his gay companions, and endeavour to subdue those passions by which he had frequently been led astray. Her taste was refined by the most exalted principles

principles of virtue ; and Albert, whose highest happiness consisted in pleasing her, aspired to the reality, rather than the appearance, of every excellence. He laboured, by his conversation, to instruct and delight her :—the wonders of creation, unfolded by him, acquired new beauties for her ; and the histories of empires excited an interest which she had never known before.

In their more serious hours the task of instruction was devolved on Margarita ; she would then expatiate on topics of the highest import ; and, animated with the wish of improving her beloved Albert, and promoting his happiness, she would inculcate the noblest lessons of benevolence, constancy, and piety.

The animated bloom which arose in the cheek of Margarita, and the joy which sparkled

sparkled in her eye at the approach of Albert, betrayed her increasing affection for him to Christina, who observed it with apprehensions for the happiness of her beloved child, foreseeing that her future separation from him would be productive of their mutual misery. While she entertained these fears, and revolved in her mind some means of preserving the peace of Margarita, her measures were disconcerted by an unforeseen event.

When the severity of winter began to relax, and the returning spring to clothe every scene with reviving beauty, the Canon proposed to his sister to visit the vale of Ermengarda.

“I have,” he added, “for some time been employed in forming a plan, which I have as yet only imparted by a letter to my friend Ernulphus. The answer, which

which was conveyed to me this morning, has tended to confirm my hopes, and strengthen my resolutions.

“I have long observed,” he continued, “the increasing attachment of Albert to Margarita, and this was the subject of my letter to my friend; the answer to which I shall now yield to your consideration.” So saying, he drew it from his pocket, and read to his sister that part of it which related to Margarita.

“I cannot,” said Ernulphus, “wholly disapprove a plan which seems to have been formed with the sole view of promoting the happiness of our adopted children. Amiable as Margarita is, Albert is worthy of her. I am convinced, from the favour you propose to confer upon him, that you have duly appretiated his many virtues. Under your inspection,

spection, his few errors will, I trust, soon be corrected ; and, with such a protector, Margarita will no longer be subject to the caprice of those who exposed her in her infancy, and who might perhaps at some future time resume their authority over her."

Having given his opinion in general terms, he entered into more particular circumstances. The few objections which his prudence suggested, appeared of so little importance to Bernardo, that he passed them over in silence ; and while he replaced the letter, " You see," said this amiable man, " that my friend approves my plan, which was no other than that Margarita should in a short time give her hand to Albert. The young Marquis Ulderic has bestowed a small estate upon his friend, which has placed him above
dependance ;

dependance ; the mansion of Ermengarda, which I will improve and beautify, will afford them a delightful retreat ; and I am well persuaded that should they require any farther assistance, you would unite with me, my sister, in endeavouring to supply them with every requisite to the enjoyment of life."

Here he paused, and looked for approbation on the countenance of Christina ; who, finding herself perplexed and irresolute, intreated him not to be too hasty in an affair in which the happiness of Margarita was so deeply concerned.

"We will to-day," said she, "in compliance with your wishes, visit Ermen-garda, and examine the state of the mansion ; in the meantime I must request you, my beloved brother, to observe a strict silence on this subject."

As

As Christina quitted the library, she ordered the coach to be prepared; the morning was serene, and the rays of the sun glistened on each dewy leaf.

Margarita, when informed of the intended expedition, asked, with much solicitude, if Albert was yet arrived at the Canonry; and being told that he was not, she protracted the moment of their departure, by some trifling preparation, in hopes that he would pay his usual visit, and be requested to join their little party. But he seemed to have forgotten his accustomed hour; and when she took her place in the coach, she relinquished with a sigh every hope of spending that day with him. Yet still as they moved slowly through the streets, she cast her eyes on every passenger, with the wish to see in each her Albert.

They

They had already passed beneath the portal of the city gates, and the hills of Ermengarda were disclosed in the distant perspective, when the coach stopped, and Albert appeared. His cheeks glowed with health, and his eyes sparkled with delight; beneath his mantle he held a small Italian greyhound, which he had that morning procured for Margarita.

Francis, without waiting his master's orders, had opened the door of the coach, and Albert, invited by the Canon, took his place by Margarita. As they continued to pursue their route, Bernardo for a time remained silent, contemplating with delight what passed between his adopted children. He marked with pleasure the joy which Margarita betrayed when Albert appeared, the smiles which dimpled her cheeks when he presented

his little dog to her, and the caresses which she bestowed upon it.

"I am well persuaded," he at length said, in a loud whisper to his sister, "that my project will be productive of the greatest happiness."

Christina checked her brother, and endeavoured to change the subject by mentioning the news of the day, inquiring after their absent friends, and asking Albert if he had received any information from Italy. In the moment of embarrassment she had unfortunately introduced the very topic which she most wished to avoid.

The good Canon, at that instant forgetting every promise of secrecy, and anticipating the future happiness of his adopted children, drew from his pocket the letter of Ernulphus, which he presented

sent to Albert, expressing some surprise that he should have forgotten to shew it him before.

“My brother!” said Christina, “you forget, certainly you forget —”

The Canon did not hear her;—his eyes were fixed with evident satisfaction on Albert; and every faculty was absorbed in the expectation of that joy, which he hoped would soon become universal.

“You certainly do not consider what may be the consequences,” exclaimed Christina, taking her brother’s hand; “we may perhaps repent.”

“Peace!” said the Canon, irritated by this interruption, “it is now too late—I cannot recall the past—the mischief, if such it may be termed, is already done.”

Albert’s impatience to hear of his friends in Italy prevented him from ob-

serving this scene ; but Margarita feared that the letter conveyed some unpleasant intelligence, and having received no answer to her repeated inquiries, she would have been really alarmed, had she not perceived that the eyes of Bernardo were expressive of pleasure.

Various were the emotions of Albert as he read what related to himself and Margarita. At one moment he turned pale, and again his cheeks glowed with joy ; but scarcely had he concluded the letter, when he yielded to the wildest transports of delight, and addressed Margarita in terms which were equally inexplicable to her, with the occasion of his joy.

As the Canon beheld this scene, he seemed to be carried beyond all bounds of prudence.

“ Well,

"Well, my son," he exclaimed, giving his hand to Albert, "since my inadvertency has so far disclosed my intentions, where is there need of any farther mystery?"

And immediately he began to relate all that had passed on this subject between himself and his sister, disclosing the real purport of their visit to Ermengarda.

Vain were the exhortations of his prudent sister; the Canon's good affections had surmounted every other consideration, nor did he even know that she had spoken till he had revealed all his purposes.

The situation of Margarita was at that moment truly distressing. Much as she loved and esteemed Albert, she feared that he might give a wrong construction to the Canon's conduct, and that the sim-

plicity and indiscretion of her guardian might even cast a shade upon her own reputation. The amiable and respectful behaviour of Albert soon, however, removed these momentary apprehensions. For some time he appeared to be totally overcome with the excess of joy; he reclined his head against the side of the coach, concealing his eyes with his hand, and lost in thought; from which he at length roused himself sufficiently to express, in the most lively terms, his sense of those obligations, of which he held himself unworthy.

The sincerity with which he spoke affected Christina, and the amiable qualities which he disclosed on this and every other occasion, reconciled her, in a great measure, to the future destination of Margarita; she endeavoured to recover from
her

her late embarrassment. The Canon conversed with gaiety, and the expression of joy was soon restored to every countenance but to that of Margarita, who alone remained silent and thoughtful.

When they reached the mansion of Ermengarda, she withdrew from her companions to regain the tranquillity of her mind, and to reflect on the late scene.

The Canon and his family remained at Ermengarda during the whole of that day, a greater part of which Bernardo employed in planning the improvements and decorations of the mansion, not forgetting to consult Francis, whose attentions were directed towards comfort and frugality: nor was Christina defective on her part; she had resolved to renew the venerable furniture, and not to dis-

grace the Gothic walls by hangings of the modern taste.

At the upper end of the hall, raised by several steps, was a parlour of about twenty feet in length; the walls were hung with tapestry, which represented the shadowy recesses of a forest, among whose leafy boughs the timid hind erected her dainty head.

The apartment was terminated at either end by a narrow window of rude masonry; from one of which were seen the woods, as they arose above the house, forming a shelter from the northern blast. Amid these, although half concealed by trees, appeared the cliff with its marble cross; from the other was descried the hamlet in the depths of the vale.

To this parlour Margarita had retired. She here hoped to remain unobserved;
she

she contemplated in silence each beautiful object which presented itself to her view, and her ear was soothed by the low murmurs of a distant waterfall.

The mind in early youth is retentive only of pleasing images; at that blissful period of life, painful sensations require a frequent repetition to make a deep impression. Margarita had soon forgotten those circumstances which had rendered the late scene unpleasant to her, while she remembered, with gratitude and delight, the sollicitude of the Canon to promote her happiness, and the delicate yet affectionate behaviour of Albert. She resolved in every action to be guided by her sage and venerable friends, and her mind was free from every other care concerning the future, than a wish to merit their kindness.

While she still indulged this train of thought, Albert entered the room. She would have withdrawn ; but gently detaining her, he used his utmost efforts to restore that tranquillity with which they had hitherto conversed. The gentleness and prudence of his address at length prevailed ; she soon became composed ; and while they remained at Ermengarda, he took no other means of expressing his gratitude than by paying every attention to the friends of Margarita, and consulting their approbation in every word and action.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

ON their return to the Canonry, Christina availed herself of the first opportunity of explaining to Margarita the events which had taken place in the morning. She represented to her, that no promise had been made on her part, that it was still in her power to retract all that had been done, and pointed out every objection, which her prudence suggested, to the proposed connexion.

To these Margarita made no other reply, than that she would be wholly guided by that superior judgment which had hitherto secured her happiness.

“My beloved child,” said Christina, as she embraced her, “during the years of your childhood, I required a blind submission to my will, as the only means of promoting your welfare ; but I now consider you as arrived at an age in which reason ought to have acquired a degree of vigour, which should in some degree enable you to judge for yourself.”

“I am sensible,” she replied, “that such ought to have been the fruits of the excellent instructions which have been bestowed upon me ; but I confess, that in this case my reason is so weak, and my judgment so easily biased, that I am unfit to decide for myself.”

From

From this conversation Christina discovered all that passed within the breast of her adopted daughter, to whom she perceived that Albert was far from being an object of indifference; and while she revered the virtue of Margarita, which had taught her to mistrust the dictates of her own heart, she became earnestly solicitous to direct that authority, with which she was invested, to the promotion of her happiness.

The numerous excellencies of Albert, which daily became more apparent his earnest pleadings, together with those of Bernardo, and the singularly precarious situation of Margarita, at length prevailed in favour of the proposed plan, to which Christina finally gave her consent.

The little party often resorted to Ermengarda, and spent many weeks there
in

in the enjoyment of a degree of happiness rarely tasted in this state of existence. The decoration of the mansion was already completed. It's antique turrets were dressed with the gadding woodbine, and the rose and jessamine bloomed upon the lawn ; and the moss-grown caverns of the waterfall, dark with the shade of the impending yew, were seen through an opening formed in the woods.

In this sweet retreat, breathing his native air, Canon Bernardo seemed to become young again. The noble images which Nature presented to his view, invigorated his imagination ; and his conversation lost none of it's charms from the degree of romantic enthusiasm with which it was sometimes tinged.

Day after day rolled away, varied by innocent and improving occupations. In
the

the deep shade of some sequestered glade, the Canon reclining upon the mossy bank, would listen to Albert as he read the legends of ancient days, or accompanied Margarita with his voice when she played upon the lute.

Bernardo was peculiarly fond of sacred music; it elevated him, he said, above this world, and seemed to give him a foretaste of the immortal joys of a future state. He heard with transport the hymn to the Holy Virgin; and the tear would glisten in his eye when Margarita, in soft and melancholy strains, recorded the death of some holy martyr.

Several months had already elapsed, and the day approached on which Margarita was to bestow her hand upon Albert. A serene and delightful evening had succeeded the oppressive heats of a sultry noon,

noon, and the sun, declining behind the western hill, cast a long train of golden light on the woody vale. Albert and Margarita had prolonged their walk beyond its usual limits; as they returned to the mansion, Albert expatiated on the happiness of his present situation, and indulged the most enchanting dreams of future bliss, promising himself a long series of years, which he should pass in that delightful retreat, with his lovely companion.

His gaiety, instead of enlivening Margarita, inspired her with a distrust of the hopes which he expressed.

“You appear thoughtful,” said Albert, while he gazed with affectionate solicitude upon her; “alas! I fear you are not happy; in the name of Heaven, tell me what you wish, and I will endeavour
to

to obtain it, although my peace, or even my life should be the forfeiture."

"I have never doubted your generosity, Albert," she replied; "you are capable of sacrificing life itself in the service of those you love; will you then, for Margarita's sake, restrain those hopes which may never be satisfied? These scenes of felicity, which you have depicted in such glowing colours, may at once fade from your view."

"Wherefore," said Albert, while a sudden glow suffused his cheek, "should Margarita indulge these gloomy forebodings?"

"I may be mistaken in my judgment," she replied; "but I have always wished to maintain that tranquillity of mind which would enable me to support with firmness the vicissitudes of life."

"And

“And by these preparations,” said Albert, “render yourself miserable when in the most prosperous circumstances.”

“By a habit of reflection,” returned Margarita, “we soften the inequalities of life; we are neither depressed by adversity, nor elated by prosperity.”

“For what evil,” exclaimed Albert, “would you prepare me? I would endure every affliction without a murmur, but a separation from my Margarita.”

They had already reached the mansion, and Margarita, who perceived that, from the heights of gaiety, he was become dejected and silent, invited him to her own apartment, where, giving him her hand, she entreated him to think no more of what was past, and taking her lute, she sung to him a little Italian ballad, which
peculiarly

peculiarly delighted him, from having heard it in early youth.

The song, according to ancient record, was composed by Adelaide, the widow of the unfortunate Lotharius, when confined in the castle of Garda. The pathetic strain entirely diverted the attention of Albert from the present scene, and when Margarita ceased to sing—

“Never,” he said, “shall I forget the day when I first heard this simple ditty!

“The Marquis Ulderic,” he continued, “possesses a castle in the north, situated in a wild and uncultivated tract of country, and little calculated for the residence of those who love the gaieties and splendours of a public life. In this castle the young Marquis and myself were frequently left under the protection of the sage Ernulphus for the space of
many

many months ; those days I have often considered as some of the happiest of my life.

“ One evening our tutor had taken us upon the ramparts of the castle, where, as he held our little hands within his, he recited to us some of those passages of history, most calculated to improve and amuse us.

“ We were so interested in his discourse, that we continued to walk upon the ramparts till the sun was set, and the shades of evening began to obscure the landscape. We were already prepared to retire to rest, when we heard soft and melodious strains wafted in the breeze ; but so faint and indistinct was the sound, that we imagined it might possibly be occasioned by the wind sighing amid the trees of the adjacent forest. We listened
till

till the low murmurs died away on the ear. Our tutor advanced to the edge of the ramparts, and leaning over the parapet, endeavoured again to catch the sound.

“When we found that all was silent, we descended into a court on that side of the castle, from which it had seemed to proceed; here we again heard the same notes more distinctly.

“Ernulphus stood for a length of time with his arms folded, and his countenance expressive of the utmost astonishment.—

“That air,” he said, “I remember to have heard the peasants sing on the banks of the Lake of Garda.”—

“It cannot be any of the domestics,” said Henry, “who sing so melodiously the songs of a foreign country, since there

are none in the castle but the daughters of the neighbouring peasantry." —

"I had been that day reading some of those innocent fictions of romance, the delight of every youthful mind; a kind of wild enthusiasm seized me at that moment—in my hand I grasped a little stick, which I waved in the air.

"'Tis some unfortunate person in captivity!" I exclaimed; "I will discover and release her. Follow me," said I to my friend, and we both rushed out of the gates, and ran along the terrace which surrounded the castle.

"I remember that I felt myself disappointed not to find some captive Princess with a coronet on her head, enchained to one of the trees of the forest, and lamenting her woeful lot in harmonious numbers!

"A

“A summons from our tutor to retire to bed, compelled us to relinquish our pursuit of this imaginary lady; but this adventure made so deep an impression upon my mind, that I from that time applied myself to the study of music, and procured from Italy my favourite song.”—

Margarita smiled at the simple tale, and heroic spirit of the young Albert; and, as the evening was far spent, replaced her lute, and returned to the Canon and Christina.

When Margarita withdrew to her chamber, which a hanging of arras only separated from that apartment in which she had received Albert, her mind was oppressed with a degree of melancholy, for which she could not assign any particular cause. She opened the casement, and remained for some moments contemplating,

ting, in pensive silence, the scene which there presented itself to her view. Beneath her window was a grassy slope, where various tall trees, which were scattered here and there, formed a delightful shade from the heats of noon. One side of this slope, as far as the eye could penetrate, the decreasing twilight was bounded by the ruins of the ancient part of the mansion, little of which remained but a few rugged walls and shapeless masses of stone, now almost overgrown with moss and wild plants; the distant hills in the horizon had long faded from the view, and the little village, in the vale below, was now no more seen.

The murmurs of the cascade as it fell from rock to rock, and the rustling of the trees amid the leafy woods, were the only sounds which stole through the air,
till

till at length that of a light step was heard in the apartment.

Margarita started, and turning hastily round, she beheld her little favourite dog fawning at her feet. It's presence renewed the remembrance of that day when she had received it from the hand of Albert, and so much was her heart softened by her late conversation with it's beloved master, that the tear trembled in her eye, and fell upon it's downy coat.

There are moments, and these sometimes recur at the very time when the gifts of Fortune are bestowed with the most liberal hand, in which the mind is capable of receiving only painful impressions, and when every object assumes an awful and portentous aspect. Such was the state of Margarita at that period ; and her imagination was so disturbed,

that she thought she beheld moving figures in the shade of the trees which waved in the wind: but she endeavoured to calm her agitated spirits, to banish every painful thought, and to resign her cares to the great Disposer of all events. She would probably have soon recovered her wonted tranquillity, when again she thought she saw a shadowy form passing amid the trees, which soon disappeared beyond a door-way in the ruins. For some moments she continued to gaze upon the spot where it had vanished from her view, till once more beginning to question the suggestions of a youthful fancy, she withdrew from the window, and, having implored the protection of Heaven, reposed her head upon her pillow, and soon sunk to sleep.

It

It was past midnight when she was suddenly disturbed by the barking of her dog: she arose with trepidation from her pillow; she gazed eagerly around, but her chamber was totally dark. When she had silenced her little guard, she listened, yet in vain, for the sounds which had excited his fears. Nothing was heard but the wind, which shook the lattice; and during the remainder of the night no other event took place which could renew her terrors.

As soon as the morning began to dawn, she arose, and, after her accustomed devotions, elevated the tapestry, hoping to dispel the gloomy images which still clouded her mind, by pursuing her usual occupations.

In the outer apartment every thing seemed to be in the same state in which

she had left it on the preceding night; the book which contained the song of the Lady Adelaide, lay unclosed upon the table.

Margarita opened the casement to receive the morning air, which seemed to revive her drooping spirits; every leaf and every blossom glistened with refreshing dews. The vapours of night, which the rising sun had not as yet dispelled, hung like clouds upon the dark grove, high above which appeared the cliff of Ermengarda.

She raised her eyes to heaven in silent adoration. A view of the mighty works of Nature, and the gifts which the Author of it has lavishly bestowed upon his children, inspired her with the noblest sentiments of gratitude, and for a moment
removed

removed every anxious thought respecting her own fate.

But short indeed were these transports. As she turned from the window, and cast her eyes upon the music-book, she perceived several words, which had been recently written, in large characters, upon the margin. She shrunk back; the colour had vanished from her cheek:—these words were traced, by some unknown hand,—their import was terrible—

“Margarita, beware—thy marriage is forbidden!”—

This awful sentence confirmed every suspicion of the last night: the mysterious gloom which involved the past, filled her mind with dreadful forebodings of future evils.

“Who shall presume,” she wildly exclaimed, “to controul my actions? Shall

any others than the guardians of my youth be the directors of my conduct? Yet how shall I resist the influence of a mysterious power, operating by concealed agents?—Adieu, then, to that tranquillity I have hitherto enjoyed!” she added, as she closed the fatal book, and sunk back upon her chair; “to thy mercy, Oh holy Heaven, I resign myself!”

The extreme paleness of her countenance, and the affrighted wildness of her air, inspired Christina, who soon afterwards entered her apartment with the most dreadful apprehensions. To all her inquiries Margarita, however, made no reply otherwise than by tears and other expressions of grief and dismay.

“While life is spared me,” she exclaimed, as she pressed the hand of her protectress within her’s, “I shall continue
to

to love and revere you, and to regret those blissful days, when I considered you as the sole directress of my fate. You were the blessed promoter, by the favour of Heaven, of my happiness; you loved me with a more than parental affection; and when torn from you, I shall indeed become an orphan."

While she spoke, she concealed her face with her hand, and so excessive was her agitation, that it was long before she was sufficiently composed to relate, with any accuracy, the events which had recently taken place.

In vain did Christina endeavour to conceal her emotions during the recital; she desired to see the book, wishing, if possible, to discover the author of the alarming sentence; but as she read the characters, she found herself more per-

plexed, and wholly incapable of giving Margarita that consolation which her circumstances required.

The hour of breakfast at length approached; Christina left Margarita, and descended into the parlour, where her appearance instantly excited the alarms of the Canon and Albert.

When informed of what had happened, the Canon remained silent and dejected; while Albert, springing from his chair, traversed the apartment in the utmost disorder.

“ ’Tis no more,” he exclaimed, after a momentary pause, “than an artifice of the Prince del Castel Nuovo! Does he suppose that I cannot penetrate his base designs? We will defeat his vain efforts. Let us hasten the day of our marriage; and when Margarita is once under my protection,

protection, I will defy the whole world in her cause."

This proposition seemed instantly to exhilarate the drooping spirits of the Canon; he yielded to Albert's persuasions, and determined to leave Ermengarda during the course of that day.

Christina was irresolute, and unable to form any decisive judgment; she dreaded Albert's impetuosity, and yet presumed not to impede the completion of his project.

Albert employed the interval previous to their departure, in fruitless efforts to console his beloved Margarita. He declared his persuasion that her terrors were occasioned by an artifice of the Prince, who knew that her situation made her peculiarly liable to receive impressions of fear.

“Alas !” she replied, “why should I presume that the Prince interests himself in my fate, much less that he could stoop to an act so base ?”

“He has seen you,” returned Albert, “and his character will justify all my suspicions.”

The smiles, the entreaties, the engaging air, and affection of this amiable youth were ineffectual to console Margarita ; they only seemed to aggravate her grief, by impressing her with a deeper sense of the loss she might sustain in him.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

BEFORE mid-day the Canon and his family left Ermengarda. Bernardo had resolved that the marriage ceremony should be privately performed before the conclusion of two days; and Albert, who confided in his own exertions, felt little anxiety with respect to the late alarming circumstance, and could he have seen his friends equally free from care, his tranquillity would have been undisturbed: but every prospect of happiness had faded

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from the view of Margarita. As the coach descended into the vale, as she cast her sad and farewell glance on the ivy'd walls of the venerable mansion, on the lawn embellished by the labours of the Canon, and the majestic grove, whose waving shades had often afforded her a sweet retreat, the tear trembled in her eye, and every effort to conceal her grief proved fruitless.

Towards the close of the day, the change of scene, added to her own exertions, at length conspired to render her more tranquil.

In the evening, as she walked with her friends in the garden of the Canonry, Bernardo endeavoured to change the object of her thoughts, by recounting, with his usual animation, some of the events of his younger days. A long intercourse

tercourse with the world had not darkened his views of human nature ; he depicted mankind rather such as it ought to be, than as it really was.

The day was closed with prayers, and a hymn to the Holy Virgin ; and Margarita, having received the blessings of her adopted parents, retired to her chamber, where every anxious thought was soon forgotten in a sweet and refreshing sleep.

On the following day several of the Canon's venerable friends dined with him, among whom was the Archbishop of Vienna, who, although far advanced in years, possessed that cheerfulness which a confidence in Heaven only can inspire. At dinner he placed himself between Albert and Margarita, the latter of whom he had known from her infancy. He gazed upon them with paternal affection,

fection, and when the domestics had withdrawn, he laid his hands upon their heads, and gave them his most solemn benediction.

“I know that you are destined for each other, my beloved children,” he said, “and I pray that your attachment may be a source of mutual happiness; but be not too secure, nor think that those bright prospects which unfold themselves to your view, may never be overcast.

“In your situation particularly, my son, you are exposed to danger. Vice, the destroyer of all happiness, lurks within the breast, and, when least suspected, frequently proves most destructive. Many of us are capable of heroic acts of virtue, but how few can resist the perpetual and insidious attacks of passion!”

At

At the hour of vespers Margarita retired from the company to perform her usual devotions in the cathedral. Albert, who was engaged in conversation, followed her with his eyes to the door of the library, and would willingly have made some excuse to leave his friends, and accompany her.

As she traversed the area, her ear was soothed by the soft notes of the organ undulating in the breeze; the western sun shed it's mellow tints on the majestic edifice, and it's golden beams were reflected from the storied windows.

Margarita, kneeling before the high altar, and rapt in prayer, remained in the cathedral till the increasing gloom reminded her of the hour. She arose, and, looking around, perceived that she was quite alone. No human step interrupted

the awful silence. She slowly traversed the shadowy aisles, and descended into the cloisters. As she trod these arched and silent avenues, and marked on either side the crumbling monuments of the departed, a sudden terror invaded her mind; she paused:—the mysterious words, with which she had been recently so alarmed, rushed upon her memory.—She trembled—for a moment she was unable to proceed;—she rested against the stone frame of a window, and burst into tears.

At that instant she heard a voice, which seemed to issue from amid the tombs. She started—she gazed eagerly around—her trembling hands were pressed to her beating heart. No figure appeared in the cloisters but that of a venerable Monk, descending into the area, dimly seen amid the gloom. A deep and awful voice

voice from where the clustered pillars cast a shade impenetrable to the human eye, was now distinctly heard to utter these words—" *Margarita, beware!*"

Her face was for a moment concealed by her united hands, and again she wildly gazed around; but no other object presented itself to her view than the bat heavily flitting amid the stone arches. The voice again said, "*Margarita, beware!*"

Conscious innocence was at that moment her only support. Her eyes were elevated to heaven, and again directed to that side from whence the voice proceeded.

"Cease to harrow up my soul," she exclaimed, in a firm tone; "whoever thou art, disclose thyself; explain thy dreadful words,

words, and if Heaven demands the sacrifice, I renounce Albert for ever!"

"*Thy marriage is forbidden!*" repeated the voice.

Margarita, wild with terror, again intreated an explanation; her clasped hands were raised to heaven, and her voice was low and disturbed; a deep sigh seemed to proceed from amid the pillars. She could no longer restrain herself; she traversed the cloisters with precipitation, and, springing forwards, rushed into the area.

Scarcely had she reached her own apartment, when she sunk on a chair in a state of insensibility, from which she recovered only to a confused and indistinct recollection of the past.

She started at the voice of the servant who came to call her to supper, and had
scarcely

scarcely sufficient composure to excuse herself from appearing before the friends of the Canon, who were not departed.

When left alone, she threw herself again upon a chair, and remained wholly absorbed in thought. Her mind received additional gloom from the venerable images which presented themselves before the windows of her apartment—the sacred towers of the convent, dark with the shades of evening, and the cypress elevating its spiry head above the walls of the Benedictine monastery.

The last streaks of light had faded from the dusky sky, when the step of Albert was heard upon the stairs. She hastily wiped away the tear which bedewed her cheek, and advanced to meet him at the door of her apartment, resolving not to disturb that tranquillity
which

which he seemed at present to enjoy, by disclosing what she had heard in the cathedral.

As Albert elevated his taper to her pale yet lovely countenance, he kindly reproved her for disturbing herself with the apprehensions of imaginary dangers.

“While assured of each other’s affection,” he said, “whom shall we fear? My life shall be devoted to your service, and the promotion of your happiness.”

When Christina and the Canon retired to their respective apartments, they found Albert still conversing with Margarita. Bernardo gave them his blessing, and admonished them of the lateness of the hour.

Albert, however, unmindful of this intimation, would willingly have protracted his departure till the dawn of day; but
Margarita,

Margarita, warned by the tolling of the midnight bell, conducted him, still reluctant, into the hall, and opening the door which leads into the area, "We must once more part," she said, with an assumed smile; "may Heaven bless you!"

"Tomorrow, beloved Margarita, he replied, "at an early hour, I shall hope to see you again; when I trust that every expression of sorrow will be banished from those lovely features."

In uttering these words he closed the door after him. She listened to his step upon the pavement, till it was no longer heard, and returned, silent and dejected, towards her own apartment.

In the meantime Christina, anxious for the welfare of Margarita, had been unable to compose herself to sleep. It had been
her

her wish to have some serious conversation with her that night ; but finding herself irresolute, and incapable of giving her any advice, she had declined the interview.

Various perplexing and uneasy thoughts occupied those hours which ought to have been devoted to repose ; and as soon as the morning began to appear, she arose, and being hastily dressed, unclosed the door of Margarita's chamber, with the intention of watching beside the beloved object of all her cares till she should awake.

The curtains were drawn around the bed, and a total silence reigned throughout the apartment. She approached the bed with cautious steps, and slowly elevated the hangings ; but instantly her hand fell, she shrunk back, and her limbs
were

were pierced with a deadly cold——Margarita was not there!—It was apparent that she had not slept there that night. For some moments Christina stood fixed in astonishment. A second time she raised the curtain, but to receive a confirmation of the event she most dreaded.

Grief and horror deprived her of the power of utterance; the darling name of Margarita trembled on her lips, and she fell with her face upon the bed in a state of insensibility.

When she recovered herself sufficiently to call upon her lost child, a scene of the wildest confusion succeeded. She was soon surrounded by all the domestics, of whom she vainly inquired the fate of Margarita.

The

The grief was now become universal, and the servants lamented their beloved young lady as lost for ever.

The faithful Francis, with some of his companions, explored the garden, the area, and the cloisters, with the fruitless hope of meeting with somewhat which might lead to a discovery.

But the silence of night still reigned throughout the city, and no traces could be found which might lead to the retreat of Margarita.

At length Francis returned to the Canonry, at the door of which he met his beloved master, who intreated an explanation of the sudden alarm. Francis would willingly have concealed the dreadful truth from the Canon, but he knew that it was impracticable.

Bernardo

Bernardo received this information with a degree of fortitude, which disclosed his pious submission to the will of Heaven. But the loss of his adopted daughter, and the destruction of those hopes which he had long so fondly cherished, was a blow which, at his advanced period of life, it was feared he would never recover.

While Francis dispatched his companions into various districts of the city, and himself went to demand the advice and assistance of the magistrates to rescue his young lady, the Canon withdrew to his sister's apartment, and seating himself beside the bed, on which she had been laid, remained silent, and oppressed with sorrow.

The whole city of Vienna was soon agitated by the report of the wonderful tale; and all who had ever known, or

seen Margarita, offered their services in attempting to discover and punish those who were the cause of her distress.

When Albert arrived at the Canonry, he seemed to be in a state almost amounting to madness. He loudly accused the Prince del Castel Nuovo as the author of his misfortunes; he rushed into the chamber of Christina, and demanded impetuously every circumstance relating to the dreadful loss he had sustained. In every incident, he imagined that he saw a confirmation of his suspicions, and left the Canonry vowing he would be revenged on the Duke, and rescue Margarita. Christina remained during that day in the most deplorable state, falling, at intervals, into strong fits, and again wildly calling upon her lost child.

Towards

Towards the close of the day, many of those who had endeavoured to discover the persecutors of Margarita, returned for farther directions ; but few entertained any hopes of success.

Such was the anxiety of Bernardo for the fate of his child, that he resolved to go to the Palace of Ormund, to assure himself whether the Prince, whom every one charged with this base act, was still in Italy. He had already ordered preparations to be made for the undertaking, when his friends, among whom was the venerable Archbishop, insisted upon his relinquishing it.

On the following day Francis returned, dispirited and without hope.

Weeks, and even months had elapsed, but no information was received of Mar-

garita; and Albert had not made any discoveries which could justify his suspicions of the Prince, who had been in Italy during the whole transaction.

The Canon and Christina summoned all their fortitude to endure this dreadful trial. The health of Bernardo began visibly to decline. He who had been lately gay, and, comparatively, active, was now scarcely able to reach the cathedral when assisted by Francis. His favourite occupations had lost their charms, his beloved Ermengarda was visited no more; his eyes, once beaming with the smiles of benevolence, were now frequently filled with tears; yet he was never heard to repine.

“If the decrees of Heaven are accomplished,” he would say, “I am content.”

To

To console her brother, Christina concealed the anguish of her heart by an apparent cheerfulness; yet, when alone, she never ceased to deplore the fate of Margarita, and to recommend her to Heaven in her prayers. She would often caress her little favourite dog, and weep over it in remembrance of its beloved mistress.

Letters were in the meantime received from the young Marquis Ulderic, who having lately passed some time with the Prince del Castel Nuovo at Rome, had proceeded with Ernulphus Gessner into the kingdom of Naples, and was hitherto entirely ignorant of the dreadful change which had taken place at the Canonry.

Albert continued his fruitless search till he received a command to join his regiment,

ment, which was suddenly called from Vienna, and was compelled to bid a sad adieu to his venerable friends, and those scenes, where first he had beheld Margarita.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

THE summer was far advanced when Albert was constrained to relinquish every hope of discovering the retreat of Margarita. He had lost much of his former animation, he became fond of retirement, and would sometimes even neglect the duties of his station to indulge his grief.

When, accompanying his regiment, he left the gates of the city, and pursued the high road which leads to Malbern, he was oppressed with an unusual degree of melancholy. The venerable image or

Canon Bernardo, from whom he had recently parted, was still present to his imagination, as he had beheld him leaning upon his staff, and elevating his eyes to heaven in prayer for his adopted children, who were no longer spared to be the consolation of his last hours.

The day already began to decline when the regiment arrived at Malbern, where it remained during that night. As Albert entered the gates of the inn, he was accosted by several servants, whom he remembered to have seen in the train of the Prince del Castel Nuovo. Albert, who had always suspected the Prince to be the occasion of his present afflictions, demanded whether he was at Malbern, resolving instantly to require satisfaction for the supposed injury; but when informed that the Prince was still in Italy,
and

and that his sister, with the Lady Frederica, were at the inn, in their way to the northern territories of the Marquis Ulde-ric, he sprung from his horse, and withdrew from his companions to indulge in retirement his melancholy reflections. From these he was soon disturbed by a message from the Princess, who, having heard of his arrival, requested that he would permit her to see him. He obeyed the summons with reluctance; the name of Castel Nuovo was become odious to him, and the anger which the Duke had excited was for a moment extended to his sister: one smile, however, of the lovely Claudia removed every doubt, if it was possible he could have entertained any, that she was a partaker in her brother's guilt.

“I had hoped,” she said, when he appeared, “that it would not have been necessary to solicit the honour of your presence; and yet,” she added, casting her eyes upon the ground, and heaving a sigh, “it would be pardonable if the deep afflictions which you have lately sustained, had obliterated the recollection of former friendships. There was a time, Albert, when you regarded Claudia and Frederica with the affection of a brother.”

Albert coloured, and endeavoured to make some apology for his recent neglect; he confessed that his anxiety for Margarita had engrossed every thought, and that uncertainty concerning her fate had rendered him insensible to every enjoyment.

“I sincerely deplore your misfortunes,” returned Claudia; “the loss you have
sustained

sustained in the lovely Margarita is irreparable, since the beauties of her form were equalled only by those of her mind. And yet," she added, "how is it possible to account for her sudden departure from the Canonry, without throwing a shade upon a character which has been hitherto irreproachable?"

Albert replied, with some warmth, that her superiority to many of her sex, in addition to her unprotected situation, exposed her to dangers, from which they were free.

Frederica, who had till this time remained silent, suddenly interrupted him, by declaring that he was deceived in the character of the lady whose loss he deplored; and concluded by using many arguments to prove that it was impossible she should have been conveyed from

the Canonry so silently as not to alarm her friends, had she made any resistance.

The indignation of Albert could scarcely bear restraint; but he recollected that Frederica was the daughter of his benefactor, and he defended the injured honour of Margarita with a moderation of which he would have scarcely thought himself capable: but seeing that the Princess and Frederica still retained their former prejudices against her, he asked them whom they suspected as partaker in her guilt.

“Do you accuse your brother?” he said, addressing himself to Claudia. “Is it from the Prince that I must demand satisfaction for this injury?”

The anger which flashed in his countenance as he uttered these words, terrified the young ladies, and they used
every

every means to clear the Prince of the charge.

Albert at length left them, still more dissatisfied and uneasy. After having spent a sleepless night, he continued his route early on the following morning.

His regiment, having passed through Prague and Dresden, took its course towards Leipzig, where it was to be stationed during the winter. In the meantime his gay companions often amused themselves with the mournful air of Albert. Their pleasantries were ill calculated to console or enliven him; he was sometimes disgusted, and sometimes irritated by them; and the restraints to which he was subjected by his situation, became intolerable.

They proceeded slowly, and a fortnight had elapsed since they left Vienna
before

before they arrived at Leipzig. The city gates were thrown open to receive them. As they entered the great street in all the pomp of military grandeur, Albert, who would formerly have been the principal actor in the cheerful scene, alone seemed melancholy and dejected. He often elevated his eyes, with the vain hope of seeing Margarita among the ladies who appeared in the balconies, but he knew too well the vanity of his expectations; and when arrived at the inn, he withdrew to a remote apartment, where, throwing himself on a chair, he remained with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed on the ground.

While he continued in this state, the commanding officer, gently knocking at the door, intreated admission. This gentleman, who had spent the greater part
of

of his life in the army, and had merited, by his courage and prudence, the highest distinctions, had resisted every temptation to which his situation is exposed, and retained the integrity of virtue in the most arduous circumstances. He considered himself as the father of his inferiors, and, as such, he partook of every innocent amusement of his children. He endeavoured, by his example, to make virtue appear amiable in their eyes, and to render vice dishonourable. His highest delight was to encourage the deserving, to reclaim the profligate, and to restore the penitent to that place in his favour, which they had deservedly forfeited.

How often had he preserved the misguided youth by encouraging him to confess his faults, and extricated him from difficulties not only by his advice,

but by every pecuniary assistance within his reach! It was now the wish of this excellent man to warn Albert of those errors, which tended to make him an object of ridicule to his companions, and entirely useless in his profession.

He assured him that he sincerely deplored his misfortune, at the same time representing to him the weakness of betraying tokens of grief to those who were incapable of sympathizing with him.

“Fortitude,” he continued, “has other scenes of action than the field of battle. It not only supports us on the most trying occasions, but is frequently necessary in our daily intercourse with our fellow-creatures, and enables us to bear, with tranquillity, the heaviest calamities which may befall us. You, my son, have certainly been most severely
tried;

tried; but you will pardon me when I declare to you, that in thus yielding to despondency, and neglecting the duties of your station, you do not display that strength of mind which your character, as a foldier, requires.

“At the same time,” he added, perceiving that the countenance of Albert was expressive of shame and sorrow, “do not misunderstand me, or think that I would condemn every kindly feeling as derogatory to the character of a warrior. Heroism does not require that we should be incapable of them, but that we should suppress them whenever they would influence us to act in opposition to our duty.

“Let me advise you, my young friend,” he added, as he took his hand, “to assume an air of greater tranquillity,
and

and to partake of the innocent amusements of your companions. I am not ignorant of the superior education which you have received, and I exhort you, in the name of that Heaven which you have been taught to revere, to bear with patience this cruel trial; and since the duties of your profession at present preclude any farther exertions for the deliverance of the young lady, console yourself by assiduously pursuing that line of conduct by which you may merit the completion of your wishes, and the favour of Heaven."

Having uttered these words, he bowed, and retired, leaving Albert penetrated with a sense of his kindness, and determined to observe his injunctions. When he met his companions at dinner, he flattered

tered himself that his exertions to appear cheerful were not unobserved by his venerable friend, who often addressed his discourse to him, and distinguished him by frequent marks of approbation.

In the evening, accompanied by the Chevalier Conradi, a young officer with whom he had been much pleased when he first entered the regiment at Lintz, Albert mounted the ramparts of the city to examine the fortifications; endeavouring by perpetual activity to lose that deep sense of sorrow which had lately rendered society irksome to him.

While the Chevalier conversed with a sentinel, Albert, who, notwithstanding his utmost efforts, frequently relapsed into melancholy, had approached the edge of the ramparts, where, leaning against the
battle-

battlements, he contemplated the landscape which presented itself to his view.

A vast plain extended itself beneath the city walls, fertilized by many small rivers. At no great distance appeared a forest of birch and pine, amid which arose a ridge of hills clothed to their summits with woods. On the most remote of these was erected a convent of grey stone, whose venerable fanes reflected the mellow tints of the declining sun. Albert asked his friend, who had formerly been stationed at Leipzig, if he had ever visited that forest.

"It is," he replied, "the forest of Rosendhall. I have spent many days at the castle of the Count of Rosendhall, which is situated in the centre of it."

"The Count," said the sentinel, interrupting him, "has been dead nearly a year,

year, and his Lady now resides at the castle."

While the Chevalier seemed desirous to gain some information concerning the Countess, Albert, again leaning against the battlements, sunk into a profound reverie. The plain of Leipzig and the forest of Rosendhall no longer occupied a thought—a blue hill, faintly seen in the horizon, had reminded him of Ermen-garda, the seat of former joys; the lovely image of Margarita presented itself in lively colours to his imagination.

From this train of thought he was roused by the Chevalier, who struck him a hasty blow upon his shoulder.

His serious air, as he demanded the occasion of this interruption, excited the unbounded mirth of his companion.

Albert

Albert with difficulty restrained his indignation, and turning aside, cast a glance of disdain upon him.

The Chevalier perceiving that he was offended, endeavoured to make a slight apology; he lamented that his friend should yield so much to melancholy, and promised to find an effectual remedy for his present afflictions.

“Tomorrow,” he added, “I will take you to see the Countess of Rosendhall.”

“The Countess of Rosendhall!” repeated Albert with some surprise; “if you can presume upon former acquaintance to visit her, yet certainly you would not introduce a stranger to her?”

“If she is offended,” replied Conradi, “I will be contented to bear the consequences of her resentment.”

And

And instantly taking his arm, led him to another part of the ramparts.

On the following morning, conducted by the Chevalier, who assured him of a favourable reception from the Lady of Rosendhall, Albert left the city. The mid-day sun shed it's burning rays upon them before they reached the forest of Rosendhall, whose waving shades seemed to invite them. Albert, who was still anxious concerning his reception from the Countess, expressed a wish to alight, and spend the remainder of the day amid the delightful recesses of the woods.

This proposal excited new merriment in the Chevalier.

"Certainly," he replied, "you expect to find the fair wanderer amid these sequestered shades."

In

In uttering these words he spurred his horse, and proceeded through the avenue with the utmost rapidity, fearing any farther delay from the scruples of his friend.

They soon emerged from the avenue, and entered a kind of wilderness of flowering shrubs and aromatic plants; here and there a marble urn appeared, half-concealed by impending boughs, or an antique statue was seen, elevating itself amid the intertwining shrubs.

The castle itself at length grew visible. It was a perfect and beautiful edifice of Grecian architecture; the majestic dome which arose from the roof, was supported by colonades of stately pillars. A rocky hill, whose steeps were invested with wood, was seen elevating itself above the castle, and forming a shadowy back-ground to the scene.

As Albert approached the castle, his reluctance to enter it increased; which being perceived by his friend, he sprang from his steed, and ringing at the gate, precluded the possibility of his return.

Two black boys soon appeared, in mantles of purple velvet, with turbans of the finest linen. The confusion of Albert now yielded to curiosity and astonishment, and, without farther hesitation, he followed them through a hall paved with white marble, and ornamented with statues in bronze, to a saloon, which was decorated in the same elegant and extraordinary taste.

On a sofa of Indian chintz lay reclined the Countess of Rosendhall, while at her feet sat an elderly lady, who was reading to her.

As they entered, she arose, and approached them. She instantly recollected the Chevalier, and looked earnestly at his companion, who shrunk back in evident confusion.

The Lady of Rosendhall still wore her mourning weeds ; a train of black crape flowed in graceful folds to the ground, and her raven tresses were bound by a string of pearls : her eyes were dark, and brilliant, and her features perfectly beautiful. It is true that the lovely bloom of early youth no longer glowed in her cheeks, yet the few depredations which time had made in her form seemed to be amply repaired by the assistances of art, and of those graces of manner, which are seldom acquired, unless by a long intercourse with the world. She expressed much satisfaction in seeing the Chevalier,
and

and turning to Albert with a smile, which instantly removed every apprehension, "May I presume to ask," she said, in a voice of inimitable sweetness, "who is this cavalier who honours the Castle of Rosendhall with his presence?"

The Chevalier instantly presented Albert to the Countess as a relation of the house of Conradi, who had prevailed upon him to introduce him in the Castle of Rosendhall.

While he spoke, the colour arose in the cheek of Albert: he was shocked at these false assertions, and yet more surprised at the effect which they produced upon the Lady of Rosendhall, who instantly assuming a gayer air, welcomed him to the castle, where she expressed a hope that it might be in her power to afford him some slight gratification.

Albert was now convinced that his presence was not disagreeable to the Countess; yet his astonishment increased every instant. Her superior grace, her dignity, her beauty, had from the first moment excited his attention; it was soon converted into admiration. While she conversed with his friend, seemingly regardless of him, he fixed his eyes upon her, and hung in deep silence on every word she uttered.

“Since that happy period,” she said, addressing herself to the Chevalier, “when I last saw you in the presence of my beloved Lord, I have sustained a heavy and painful trial; I have lost the best of friends—I am now, as it were, alone in the world—I am deprived of all that once attached me to life.”

As

As she spoke, the tear glistened in her eye, which she hastily wiped away.

“For Heaven’s sake,” said the old lady, who had hitherto remained silent, “endeavour to subdue this excess of grief; and allow it no longer to darken the whole course of a life, which was formerly exercised in promoting the virtue and happiness of your fellow-creatures.”

“I know your partiality to me,” returned the Lady of Rosendhall, taking her hand, “and I am sensible that it is my duty to hearken to the advice of a friend, who has no other view than the advancement of my welfare; yet how shall I rend that object from my memory which seems interwoven with my very existence, without whom this world has not a charm? But whither would recol-

lection lead me? Pardon, gentlemen, this sudden weakness," she added, looking upon her guests, "I will dwell no longer upon this melancholy subject."

She immediately assumed a more indifferent air, and addressing herself to Albert, who was deeply interested by these tokens of attachment to her deceased Lord, asked him if he had remarked the paintings which ornamented the walls of the saloon.

"I am allowed," she said, "by some of those who see me in a favourable point of view, to be a judge of the art. I acquired a little taste for those trifles in the Court of Francis the First, where I was carried during my early childhood ; and indeed in these and literary pursuits I have found my great and only solace amid the
misfortunes

misfortunes with which I have been oppressed.

“Nor will I conceal from you, gentlemen, what has been the object of my life. For some time past fortune has placed me in a situation where the society is rude and uncivilized. To improve the minds, to polish the manners of my neighbours, to give them a taste for more refined pleasures, to form a little elegant circle around me, has long been my pursuit, which it was the last request of my Lord that I would not relinquish. I confess that I am partial to this country, the native soil of the Count of Rosendhall. I love this castle, which it has long been my delight to embellish; I love this sweet seclusion, where I mark the daily growth of trees planted by my own hands, where my agitated mind tastes the

charms of tranquillity, and cherishes, undisturbed, a thousand sad, yet pleasing recollections. But from this solitude, in compliance with the wishes of the former beloved possessor of my heart, I sometimes tear myself, and, concealing my internal anguish under the semblance of gaiety, I partake of public amusements, and am sometimes induced to give entertainments in my own house."

"The world has the greatest reason," returned the Chevalier, "to exult in the benevolence which induces it's fairest ornament to forsake that solitude where every excellency is disregarded."

"The friendship of the Chevalier Conradi to the Count of Rosendhall," she replied, "will always entitle him to a place in my esteem. The society of a few chosen friends, to whom I can open
my

my heart, and pour forth it's every feeling, is the highest and only enjoyment of my life. Happy are those moments, when, throwing aside all restraint, I may be permitted to shed a tear to the memory of the best of men !”

“ Must I then,” said the old lady, “ exert my authority to forbid this conversation ? Gentlemen,” she said, looking at Albert and his friend, “ will not the public scenes, to which you have lately been witnesses, afford some new topic ?”

The entrance of the pages to announce the hour of dinner interrupted the discourse. The Chevalier and his friend instantly arose to depart, but the Countess insisted upon their remaining at the castle till the following day.

“ What,” said she, “ shall I thus dismiss the friend of my deceased Lord ?—

Shall I pay so little respect to his memory?"

The Chevalier bowed, and, taking her hand, conducted her to the library, where a small, yet exquisite repast was prepared in services of china. The singular elegance of this apartment did not yield to any other; frames of cedar were ranged in order at the distance of some feet from the wall, and filled with the most choice collection of books and manuscripts; the different compartments of the library were separated by statues and urns of alabaster; the ceiling was carved, and enriched with medallions and antique figures; and the windows, descending to the floor, opened on a lawn shaded with trees and flowering shrubs.

The traces of sorrow no longer remained on the lovely features of the Lady
of

of Rosendhall; her conversation was now animated by gaiety, and enlivened by wit. But Albert was not equally interested in her smiles and her tears; he now scarcely heard what was said, and answered with evident indifference. His countenance was once more clouded with melancholy, and Margarita alone occupied his thoughts.

CHAP. X.

WHEN the repast was concluded, and the Countess had retired, the gay Chevalier ridiculed the gloominess of Albert.

“Will not even the charming Lady of Rosendhall enliven you? Will you still continue to deplore the loss of the faithless orphan?”

Albert replied with some warmth, and Conradi, whose spirits were unusually elevated, expressed his opinion of Margarita's sudden departure from Vienna in terms which proved him to entertain

the strongest prejudices against the female character.

Albert, remembering the injunctions he had lately received, suppressed his emotions of resentment ; and casting an angry glance upon the Chevalier, rushed out of the room, and hastily traversing the hall, wandered into that part of the pleasure-ground which they had passed through in the morning.

Deeply absorbed in thought, he continued to pursue the flowery track till evening had shed it's refreshing dew on every leaf, and the sun declined behind the woody hill.

The tranquil scene was favourable to reflection, but thought did not contribute to compose his mind. He had, for a length of time, believed his Margarita faultless ; he had considered her as excellent

ling in virtue as much as in external charms; he had deplored her loss, and looked forward to her restoration as the highest happiness to which he could aspire.

But frequent calumnies now began to cloud her reputation. He had hitherto maintained her cause in opposition to every censure; but suspicion at length penetrated his mind, and darkened every hope. He no longer dwelt with that pure delight upon the remembrance of former pleasures; he recollected the ambiguous circumstances which attended her departure, and he trembled lest the surmises of his friend should not be wholly groundless.

At the moment when he was most deeply engaged in these reflections, his attention was excited by the low murmurs

murs of a voice not far distant. The sound was familiar to his ear; it recalled a thousand vague yet pleasing images to his recollection.

He remained for some time fixed in silent expectation, totally unmindful of the strange appearance which his absence must bear to the Lady of Rosendhall. A voice was again heard;—how did each enchanting tone remind him of his Margarita! Every doubt, every suspicion, was at once lost amid the tumults of delight. He gazed wildly around; he knew not from whence the sound proceeded. Again and again he would have called upon her; and again and again her beloved name, half uttered, died away on his trembling lips.

Two female figures were seen as they crossed the lawn; in one of these Albert,
wild

wild with joy, thought he beheld Margarita. The surrounding woods cast a shade upon every object, but her graceful form and flowing tresses waving in the breeze, were instantly recollected by him; he sprung forwards with the wildest expressions of joy.

“Oh Margarita!” he exclaimed, in faltering accents, as he pressed her to his heart; but he received no answer. In trembling haste the lady struggled to disengage herself from him, and plunging into the depths of the wood, was instantly concealed amid the clustering branches.

Albert stood motionless, and fixed in astonishment. He gazed upon her till she was shaded from his view; he listened in silence to the rustling of the leaves, and the distant sound of her step; and when he at length found himself alone,

he

he struck his hand upon his forehead, and continued to deplore his folly in entertaining a hope which could but terminate in disappointment, till, weary and exhausted by his own efforts, he returned towards the castle.

He entered the saloon where the Lady of Rosendhall was conversing with the Chevalier; and, throwing himself on a sofa, remained silent and dejected.

Conradi, who had been much accustomed to see his friend in this situation, was wholly inattentive to that air of melancholy which gave him additional charms in the eyes of the Countess.

She tried every soothing art to remove his afflictions; or, rather, she wished to change the object of his care. She called for her harp, and placing herself beside him, she sung the sweetest and most pathetic

thetic airs, which gradually, when his attention was excited, she changed into gayer tones.

Albert elevated his head; his smiles were returned by the expressive glances of the Lady of Rosendhall, rejoicing in the success of her efforts to enliven the engaging youth. She laid aside her harp, before the melodious notes, too long repeated, should have palled upon the wearied ear; and Albert found charms in her conversation which he had never experienced but in the society of Margarita. By degrees he lost the painful impression which his late disappointment had left on his mind. The engaging attentions of the Countess stole gradually upon him, and, before he was conscious of it, he was himself become animated.

A rich

A rich repast succeeded. Could he refuse the sparkling goblet from the hand of the Lady of Rosendhall, or withstand the raillery of the Chevalier? Thus, till a late hour, was the festivity of the evening prolonged, and the following day was far advanced when they assembled at breakfast. But Albert was no longer gay; the remembrance of his afflictions, which the merriment of his companions had obliterated for a few hours, returned with increasing violence, and deep melancholy was once more expressed in his countenance. This was not unobserved by the Lady of Rosendhall; she considered it an attempt worthy of her ambition, effectually to remove it; and insisted that the Chevalier and his friend should remain at the castle till the following day.

“I ex-

"I expect," she said, "some of the most distinguished families from Leipzig to dine with me, and I flatter myself that the amusements of the evening will not prove unpleasant to you."

To this invitation they readily assented.

A short period before the arrival of her expected guests, the Countess finding some pretext to withdraw Albert from his friend, conducted him to the library, where by degrees she led him into a conversation, which became every moment more interesting.

The subject of their discourse was grief, and the natural propensity of those who lament the loss of a beloved friend, to seek consolation in the objects most resembling those they deplore.

"How much do we love that person," said she, "in whom we see the beauty bloom

bloom anew, on which we once delighted to gaze; in whom we mark those virtues we once loved, or trace the wisdom we once revered!

“I know that you, Sir, will sympathize with me,” she continued, “when I expatiate on this my favourite topic; for too well I have marked the sorrow with which at times you seem to be oppressed, and am persuaded that neither your youth nor your numerous excellencies have preserved you from the attacks of adversity.”

“Alas! Madam,” returned Albert, “if I have appeared melancholy, it was unknown to myself. I have indeed suffered a heavy calamity, but I have many alleviations of my misery; among which there is none that I more highly value
than

than the favour of the Lady of Rosendhall."

"My sympathy," she answered, concealing her glowing cheek with her hand, "is but the tribute due to your merit. From the first moment I saw you, I felt an interest in your welfare—an interest," she repeated with a sigh, "perhaps too great for my future peace!"

The generous heart of Albert was deeply affected by these tokens of regard. He believed that he had found in the Countess a firm and powerful friend, to whom he could disclose his sorrows, and in whose society the hours of suspense and absence from Margarita would glide rapidly away.

Such were the thoughts which quickly glanced athwart his mind, and animated every feature, when he threw himself on
his

his knees before her. His dark eyes, elevated towards her, expressed that gratitude with which she had inspired him, when suddenly a door, which opened from the library upon the lawn, was unclosed, and a young lady appeared upon the steps.

Albert, still holding the hand of the Countess, turned round to demand, with some asperity, who it was that presumed to intrude upon them. He started—he trembled—he grew pale—it was Margarita who stood before him! but Oh! how changed from what she was when he first beheld her at the Canonry! The bloom of health no longer glowed in her cheek, and her eyes were dim with tears as she gazed upon Albert kneeling at the feet of the Lady of Rosendhall.

Yet afflicted, agitated, confused as she was, she preserved a sufficient degree of presence of mind to conceal her emotions from the Countess, who, trembling with the angry passions which her appearance had excited, demanded, in a severe tone, the occasion of this intrusion.

“Begone from hence,” she said “and think not that I have forgotten the Baron of Wermisdorf!”

Margarita heaved a sigh, and, turning hastily away, was inattentive to the voice of Albert, who, springing from the ground, demanded, with wild impatience, who was the Baron of Wermisdorf. But Margarita, traversing the lawn with hasty steps, was already at some distance, and the Countess made no reply, but gazed eagerly upon his agitated countenance, and prevented his pursuit of Margarita,
by

by hanging upon his arm, and beseeching him to reveal the occasion of his disorder.

“Let me know instantly,” exclaimed Albert, “if I must consider the Baron of Wermisdorf as a rival? Shall he deprive me of her whom I hold most dear?—Oh, agonizing thought!” he added, striking his hand upon his forehead, “death would be preferable to this incertitude!”

The Lady of Rosendhall was astonished and confused; she still grasped his arm, and seeing that in each change of passion his countenance displayed some new beauty, some grace before unobserved, she became more deeply interested in him, and intreated, with unusual earnestness, that he would grant her an explanation of the agitation which he had betrayed, and which vanity inclined her to attribute

to something which she might herself have said, rather than to the appearance of Margarita.

The entrance of the Chevalier and several of the expected guests at that moment delivered Albert from the importunities of the Countess; and, regardless of all observation, he rushed from the library, and pursued the same path which Margarita had taken. In a few moments he had reached the spot where, sheltered by the impending branches of the trees, she reclined her head upon her arm, and yielded without restraint to her grief.

She started on beholding Albert, and as he approached, withdrew, with an air which shewed a determination to avoid him.

He

He was wrought almost to madness by this act; he sprung forward, and rudely seizing her hand—

“Already, Margarita,” he exclaimed, “have you fled me twice, and still you avoid me; how have I merited this treatment?”

She trembled, she endeavoured to disengage her hand, but made no reply.

“You wish me to leave you,” continued Albert, in a voice scarcely articulate; “this last wish of my once beloved Margarita shall be accomplished. But, before I bid her an eternal farewell, I must know to whom I am indebted for the loss of her affection; another possesses that place in her heart of which I vainly thought myself secure.”

“Do these inquiries become you at this time, Albert?” replied Margarita,

elevating her glistening eyes; "will you add reproaches to those afflictions with which my heart is already oppressed?"

Albert was at that moment too much exasperated to be softened even by her tears.

"You think every explanation unnecessary," he said; "you are not desirous to exculpate yourself to him, whom you once held dear; I will henceforth cease to demand an explanation, which would but confirm my suspicions. Adieu," he added, "it is your wish that we should part."

"It would be well for my peace," replied Margarita, wiping away the tear which trembled in her eye, "if the name of Albert could be effaced for ever from my memory."

In

In uttering these words, she struck into a winding path, amid the adjacent woods, and was soon concealed from his view.

Albert returned to the castle, torn by the most dreadful conflict of various passions. The Countess and her friends had left the library, where, throwing himself on a chair, he sunk into a state of stupefaction, condemned to endure in silence those griefs which would admit of no relief.

The sound of festivity in an adjoining apartment at length aroused him ; he rose.

“ No longer shall the days of youthful gaiety,” he exclaimed, “ be consumed in deploring the inconstancy of the faithless, yet beautiful, Margarita. Are there not others equally fair ? and since she is not superior in virtue, the transient charms of

a fading form shall not entitle her to the love of Albert."

Having uttered these words, with a beating heart, and eyes flashing with fierce and impetuous passions, he fought the Lady of Rosendhall, in whose smiles he found an additional motive for breaking those bonds of honour and affection which formerly united him to Margarita. Every thing which surrounded the unfortunate pupil of Ernulphus was calculated to banish thought, and to entangle him still deeper in the intricacies of vice. Inflamed by resentment, the lately virtuous Albert had forgotten all the precepts of his revered instructor ; and, to avoid those reflections which were become painful to him, he plunged into excesses which he would formerly have abhorred. At the banquet he was seated
by

by the Lady of Rosendhall, whose fascinating smiles won hourly upon his heart. He laughed, he sung, and enlivened the whole company by frequent bursts of wit. The Countess, sympathising with the engaging youth, was equally animated.

When the repast was concluded, she gave him her hand, and he conducted her to the saloon, whither she was followed by a train of young and beautiful ladies, who thoughtlessly partook of every gaiety.

“What charm can have wrought this change in my friend, who was lately so sad, that a smile was never seen to enliven his countenance?” said the Chevalier, addressing himself to one of his fair companions.

“Gay or sad,” she replied, catching

the spirit of the moment, "your friend must always be charming."

A young lady, whose expressive glances betrayed every sentiment of her soul, smilingly approached the Countess, and interrupting a conversation which was at that time passing between her and Albert, "That cavalier," she said in a low voice, "is alone worthy to possess the heart which has hitherto been solely devoted to the Count of Rosendhall."

The Countess gently rebuked her, and turned aside to conceal her blushing face, at the same time allowing Albert, who had overheard what had passed, to take her hand, and press it to his lips.

The scene every moment became more interesting to the unfortunate youth, and he found increasing attractions in the

Lady

Lady of Rosendhall. Wherever he cast his eyes, he perceived that he was courted and admired ; his heart beat with joy, but it was a joy which reflection would not approve.

The Countess and several of her young companions at length arose to leave the room. He would have detained her, but she disengaged herself from him, expressing a hope that her temporary absence would be productive of some slight pleasure to him.

“ Ah, what pleasure can atone for the loss of your society ? ” said Albert, as he pursued her with his eyes. When she was no longer present, he became dejected ; he reclined his head upon his arm, and remained totally regardless of all that passed around him. The image of Margarita would sometimes resume it's former

place in his mind ; but he endeavoured to banish it, and to substitute in it's stead that of the beautiful Countess.

Such was the state of his mind, when an ample folding door, which terminated the saloon, was thrown open, and a magnificent theatre was displayed to view. Albert was among the foremost who rushed forward to take their seats, and the doors were immediately closed. Numerous waxen tapers illuminated this beautiful building, the ceiling of which was enriched with various emblematic figures, and the walls were adorned with festoons of purple velvet fastened by cords of gold.

Albert placed himself in the front of the stage, and remained so deeply absorbed in thought, that he was entirely abstracted from the present scene, till the
curtain

curtain was gradually elevated, and soft, yet animated, airs were heard.

A Grecian temple was represented on the theatre, and stately columns of porphyry extended to the back of the stage. In the distant perspective other majestic edifices were seen, elevating themselves amid groves of laurel and myrtle. A female figure at length became visible, gliding with inimitable grace towards the spectators; a Grecian robe of silver crape hung in folds to the ground, collected by a zone of purple amethysts; her shadowy tresses flowed loosely on her shoulders, and on her head sparkled a tiara of burnished gold. She advanced; grace was in every action, and dignity in every step. It was the Lady of Rosendhall. Albert contemplated her in mute admiration—her cheeks bloomed with a rosy hue, her

eyes sparkled with animation, her voice was inimitably sweet, and her smiles seemed to exhilarate every heart. But while she attracted universal admiration, her whole attention was directed to Albert, and every word appeared to be addressed to him only. These flattering marks of distinction were not unregarded by him; his heart beat tumultuously; the triumph of the Countess was evident in the expression of his eyes as he gazed upon her, and Margarita was, for a moment, wholly forgotten. The scene at length changed, and instead of the magnificent temple, and the lovely Countess, other, and more common figures presented themselves to his view.

At length suddenly recollecting himself, he hastened from the theatre, and, rushing into the saloon, threw himself on
a sofa

a sofa in a state of confusion and agitation which he had never before experienced. He was irritated against Margarita, whom he censured as having forsaken her friends, and betrayed his affection; and he found himself incapable of resisting the arts of the Countess, who in beauty, in engaging manners, was scarcely inferior to his once beloved Margarita.

Several servants at that instant passed through the saloon, carrying refreshments into the theatre. Albert called for some wine, which he drank with avidity, purchasing present ease by future pain.

Loud applauses were at that moment heard from within. He sprung from the sofa, and rushed into public, where he hoped to exclude those painful reflections which disturbed his mind.

The stage now represented a dreary and desert scene ; thunder was heard from afar, and fictitious lightning flashed across the gloom : a tomb, apparently of sculptured stone, was erected in the front of the stage, by which knelt the Lady of Rosendhall ; her limbs were shrouded in a mourning robe, and folds of black crape concealed her flowing hair ; in her hand she held a torch, which shed a faint and sickly light on the scene.

The lovely mourner bent, with well-feigned anguish, over the tomb, and her eyes glistened with the ready tear.

For a moment the torch burned dimly, and at length expired ; a deeper shade involved every object, and the distant murmurs of the thunder had ceased. A solemn pause ensued. When again new lights flashed upon the scene, the

the tomb, with every emblem of grief, had vanished, the veil and mourning robe no longer concealed the figure of the Countess, but the gold once more sparkled amid the flowing ringlets of her hair, and joy kindled in her radiant eye.

Various light and resplendent figures now appeared in the distant perspective, moving in time to the sound of animating music ; they encircled the Countess, and sung these exhilarating words, in tones at once melodious and powerful :—"The day of grief is past ; let us partake of the new joys which now await us, joys which with life alone shall cease to charm !"

The Lady of Rosendhall smiled ; her expressive eyes were fixed on the enraptured Albert, who still continued to gaze
upon

upon her; the curtain fell, and her image was still present to him, when, to avoid the observation of his watchful companion, he once more quitted the theatre..

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

ALBERT passed through the saloon with hasty steps ; and, flying from his own thoughts, rushed into the hall, the deep silence of which was only interrupted by the music of the theatre stealing softly through the still air.

In this tranquillity a strong conviction of his errors returned to his mind. The sentiments, which the late scene had been intended to convey, had not escaped his penetration. His vanity was flattered by
the

the marked preference of the Countess ; but a degree of disapprobation was mingled with the admiration she had excited, and Margarita, such as he had formerly believed her to be, was an object of deep regret. He folded his arms, and, fixing his eyes upon the pavement, traversed the hall with slow and uneven steps. His first wish was to leave Rosendhall Castle, to forsake it's lovely inhabitants for ever, and, in the pursuit of honour, to forget all that he once held dear. But this resolution held him not a moment ; and he thought the highest advancement in his profession would be too dearly purchased by the sacrifice.

While these reflections passed in his mind, a graceful form, seen by the light of the moon, advanced towards him. He instantly recognized Margarita, and, no longer

longer heated by passion, wished to throw himself at her feet, and intreat a restoration to her favour; but he was restrained by a kind of false shame. He folded his arms, and demanded, with an air of distant respect, the occasion of her appearance.

She was perplexed and astonished at the determined coolness of his address. She turned aside her head to conceal the tear which she vainly endeavoured to suppress, and some moments had elapsed before she could acquire fortitude to reply.

“I come not, Sir,” she at length said, “to demand a renewal of those vows by which I once held myself bound for life. I seek not a restoration to your affection—No—Heaven is my witness that none but the purest, the most disinterested motives have induced me to take a step, which

which the established customs of the world might condemn: although I have relinquished every hope of your returning affection," she added, "yet I shall never cease to be interested in your welfare, and to pray for your happiness. You were the adopted son of Canon Bernardo, and the companion of my happiest hours; shall I then allow you to plunge yourself into an abyss of sorrow, without warning you of your danger?"

Here her voice faltered; she seemed to hope that Albert would have given her some encouragement in the difficult task she had undertaken; but confusion and remorse now prevented his utterance, and he permitted her to proceed in silence.

"To you, Sir," resumed Margarita, "from the remembrance of our former attachment,

attachment, I owe an explanation of any part of my conduct, which may have appeared defective. I would wish," she added, with a deep sigh, "to shew myself worthy of your esteem, while I leave you free from those engagements which a farther knowledge of the world may have rendered burthenfome to you."

Albert, who was now convinced that she was innocent of those faults of which he had suspected her, would willingly have interrupted her with expressions of deep sorrow and contrition for his late fatal errors; but she paid little regard to the emotions which he betrayed, and continued her discourse with a greater degree of firmness and composure.

"I will not weary you," she said, "with a detail of events which cannot now interest you. I have never yet deceived
you,

you, and I am persuaded you will credit me, when I assure you, that means the most violent were used to tear me from those friends, whose parental kindness won my youthful affections, and will always entitle them to the first place in my heart."

She would have proceeded ; but Albert, yielding at once to the wild transports of delight, had caught her to his heart.

"Oh, my beloved, my excellent Margarita!" he exclaimed, "I wanted but this assurance to complete my felicity. But wherefore," he asked, "would you allow me to remain so long under a delusion, which might have proved fatal to my peace?"

Margarita gently endeavoured to withdraw the hand which he had grasped within his. Her pleasure was disturbed
by

by apprehensions lest Albert should misinterpret her conduct; she assured him, that she had not been induced to seek an interview with him from the wish of laying any restraint upon his actions, but merely to warn him of those arts by which she feared he might be deluded.

“ You will, I trust,” she added, “ not attribute it to any wrong intention, if I admonish you that the course of life into which you are likely to be drawn, is not calculated either to promote your happiness, or your virtue. You have been educated in the habits of piety; you have abilities which might entitle you to the highest honours of your profession, yet virtue and honour must both be sacrificed if you yield to the temptations which now lie before you.”

“ Listen

“Listen to my earnest entreaties,” she continued, “and before it may be too late, leave the Castle of Rosendhall. The Countess is indeed beautiful; she has powers of eloquence which are but too well calculated to delight; she is fully sensible of those powers, and she would rejoice in their influence over the unsuspecting Albert; but his taste must alter, he must experience a fatal change in his once refined and exalted sentiments, if her society could afford him that happiness, which Margarita wishes he may enjoy.”

He attempted at that moment to seize her hand a second time, but she withdrew it with a serious and dignified air.

“Adieu!” she said; “and although we may never meet again, yet remember, I beseech you, my last request. Allow not
a few

a few exterior charms, allow not even powers of fascination superior as those of the Lady of Rosendhall, to induce you to forget the noble principles which you acquired in early life. No advantages are equivalent to the difficulties in which a connection inconsistent with virtue might involve you; present misery is not it's worst effect."

She had already retired several steps, no longer able to conceal the agitation of her mind, when Albert, following her, threw himself on his knees before her.

"And can you propose a separation for life?" he exclaimed. "Can you leave me for ever without a pang? I am conscious that you are but too justly offended; but Heaven is my witness that I never ceased to deplore your loss; that the Lady of Rosendhall never for a mo-

ment occupied a thought, till, by cruelly avoiding me, you led me to suppose that I was no longer dear to you."

"Could I, without sorrow," she replied, "behold my Albert kneeling at the feet of the Lady of Rosendhall?"

Albert, no longer actuated by cruel and groundless suspicions, ceased to expostulate with his beloved Margarita; a consciousness of his own errors alone disturbed his joy. Never till that day had he widely deviated from the paths of rectitude, and he had never experienced the pangs of remorse, till at the moment when the restoration of his Margarita should have elevated him to the heights of joy. His only consolation was to confess all his faults to her, and to receive their pardon from her lips.

"Never,"

"Never," he said, "shall I forget the lesson which this day's experience has taught me. In future my only ambition shall be to please my Margarita, and to act on every occasion as she shall direct."

All distrust being now removed, and that mutual confidence restored which formerly subsisted between them, Albert would willingly have persuaded Margarita to fly the castle with him that very evening.

She represented to him the impracticability of such an enterprize, as the gates were already closed, but promised to meet him in the library, when the family were retired to rest, where, during the silence of night, they should have leisure to concert their future plans, and to converse on those events which had taken place during their separation.

Several voices being heard at that moment, Margarita was compelled to retire.

With what different sentiments did Albert now behold the Lady of Rosendhall, to those with which she had lately inspired him ! He rejoiced that he had been prevented from opening his heart to her, and betraying his connection with Margarita ; and imagined that he had nothing to fear but from the indiscretion of his companion, who might mention her to him in the presence of the Countess.

He waited with the utmost impatience the hour of retirement, when he should be enabled to impart to Margarita the plan he had already formed for her escape, and to hear by what means she had been conveyed from Vienna to Rosendhall Castle.

The

The night was far advanced when Albert returned to the library, where he was soon joined by Margarita. He received her with every expression of delight, and lamented those bars and bolts by which she was imprisoned.

"But to-morrow," he said, "I will deliver my beloved Margarita from her persecutors. At an early hour I will return to Leipzig, and procure horses, with which I will meet you in the dusk of evening, at the foot of the hill which rises above the castle."

"But," replied Margarita, "although I am permitted to walk in any part of the forest, yet I am generally attended by a very watchful guard."

Albert smiled at this impediment, which he deemed trifling, and assured her that

he would find some means to dispose of her companion.

They at length concerted the whole of their plan; and as she would not consent that Albert should attend her to Vienna, it was determined that he should conduct her to the Convent of St. Agnes, in the city of Meissen, where she might remain till the Canon could be informed of her situation.

As there still remained a great portion of the night, Albert entreated Margarita to satisfy his curiosity, by informing him in what manner she had been brought to the Castle of Rosendhall. With this request she instantly complied.

“On that memorable night,” said Margarita, “when I last saw you at Vienna, while I still listened to your footsteps as you crossed the area, I heard a low voice, which

which proceeded from the farther part of the hall. I returned with haste towards the stairs; a dark figure, rushing forwards, impeded my passage. The taper which I held in my hand, was extinguished, and at the same moment a handkerchief was bound over my mouth, which deprived me of the power of calling for assistance.

“A veil was thrown over my head, and I was drawn forward with a force which I was totally unable to resist. The hand of my conductor trembled; but he seemed resolved to complete the daring enterprize which he had attempted with so much success.

“I was conveyed, as I thought, through the garden of the Canonry, for our passage was sometimes impeded by the shrubs; but those slight obstructions were soon removed, and I was led through a door,

which had long been unused, into the courts of the Convent of St. Anne, which is situated at the bottom of the garden.

“Here my companion stopped, and unbound the handkerchief. I lifted up the veil, and gazing around, found myself encircled by the massive walls of the convent; a few dim lights issued from the cells of the holy sisters in the adjoining towers, and no sound met my ear but that of a footstep beating upon the paved walk beneath the walls.

“The dark form of my persecutor, as he stood beside me, was scarcely visible amid the gloom; and his deep silence, for I had not as yet heard him utter a word, seemed portentous of some impending ill.

“Finding myself at liberty to complain, I now yielded, without restraint, to the anguish of my heart. With streaming

eyes, and united hands, I implored his mercy, and used every argument which might induce him to grant me my liberty ; but when I found that he still remained inexorable, I became almost frantic with grief ;—I extended my hands to that side of the wall which concealed the lowly roofs of the Canonry from my view—I called on Canon Bernardo by the sacred title of father, and deplored the beloved protectors of my youth as lost to me for ever.”

“Wherefore this delay?” said my conductor, in faltering accents; and as he spoke, he seized my arm, and compelled me to proceed, threatening to punish me, even with death itself, if I presumed to dispute his will.

“ I was prevented from calling for assistance by the same means which had

been employed before ; and I now found myself at the entrance of a long arcade, where a few lamps, suspended from the roof, shed a pale sepulchral light on the scene, and disclosed my companion more fully to my view. His limbs were shrouded in a mantle of dark cloth, and his face was wholly concealed by a mask of a dusky hue. Several figures of the holy sisters were seen in the distant perspective, as they crossed the vaulted passages ; but they either did not see me, or were regardless of the tokens I gave of distress.

“ At length we reached an irongrated gate, which closed the arcade. A nun, of a melancholy aspect, advanced to unbar it. My conductor clasped me in his arms, and carrying me forward, lifted me into a carriage, which waited without the gate.

“ The

“The horrors I then endured were such as I am unable to describe—I would wish to obliterate them from my recollection. We continued to move with rapidity during the darkness of the night, and the town of Holabrunn was the first which appeared with the light of day. Having passed this town, we turned aside into a dreary and unfrequented track of country, and continued our journey for some hours in uninterrupted silence.

“It was after having taken some refreshment at a wretched hovel, situated in the centre of these wilds, that I once more attempted to expostulate with my companion, and to implore his mercy.—

“I am a miserable being, Margarita,” he replied, “and by attempting to influence me by your tears and entreaties, you only aggravate my sufferings, with-

out advancing your own cause. Be it then known to you," he added, in a sterner tone, "that what I do is from necessity, and that I am not able to render you more happy, although, were I to abandon you, the horrors of your lot would be most severely increased."—

"I was so shocked at this reply, that the tears trickled down my cheek, and I desisted from those petitions which I now was persuaded would prove ineffectual. But the tears which I shed in silence seemed so greatly to affect my companion, that he took my hand, and, while he pressed it within his—" Pardon me, Margarita," he said, "if I seem too harsh; mine is indeed a cruel fate :—I have a heart formed for the sweetest affections, which I dare not indulge : it would be my delight to diffuse happiness around
me,

me, and to be beloved by all those who are dependant on me ; but I have been made an instrument of cruelty in the hand of a tyrant, the mockery of those whose arts have ensnared me ; I am at this moment a slave, the vilest of slaves ; I would break my chains, but I have not power !”—

“ There was something so impressive in the manner in which he uttered these words, that I had not courage to make any reply, or to demand an explanation of them.

“ During the remainder of the day we continued our journey in silence. We had hitherto met few travellers ; but from some observations which I had made, I found that my companion was perpetually harassed by fears of pursuit ; and when, towards the approach of evening, some of the attendants discovered several horsemen,

men, who followed us at a considerable distance, these fears became so excessive, that he resolved to continue his journey during the night.

“The emotions which my conductor betrayed, at one moment inspired me with hope, and at another with terror; at one moment I thought that my afflictions could not be aggravated, and at another I felt an insurmountable dread of my unknown pursuer.

“Again the grey dawn began to appear, and the rising sun disclosed to our view a ridge of hills, whose bare and rugged summits seemed to pierce the clouds; at their feet extended a track of almost pathless wilds, through which rolled a clear and rapid stream.

“It was noon-day when we reached the banks of the river; and as we had
hitherto

hitherto seen nothing of the persons whose appearance had terrified us so much on the preceding evening, the spirits of my companion began gradually to revive, and he attempted to console and re-assure me, maintaining that in all he did, he only sought to insure my peace, and to preserve me from an enemy who sought my destruction.

“The air of sincerity with which he made this assertion, almost convinced me that he did not deceive me; and various vague conjectures concerning this secret enemy from that time occupied my mind.

“Having at length crossed the river in a small bark, we found a peasant, with mules, waiting for us on the opposite side, to conduct us over the mountains.

“As we ascended the first eminence, I looked back with agonizing emotions of

grief towards my beloved Vienna; but no object met my view except a few grey spires of a convent, dimly seen beyond an extent of heath, over which we had passed.

“From this eminence we descended into a deep hollow way, dark with the shades of beech and oak, whose tangled boughs formed a lofty canopy over our heads; a few rugged junipers and hollies were scattered upon the rocky sides of the mountains between which we passed; no sound of a human voice was heard amid these vast solitudes. My companion seldom spoke, and the peasant, who was our guide, proceeded at some distance before us with the only servant which now attended us, the others having been dismissed on the banks of the river.

“As

“As the evening advanced, my companion again began to express some fears lest he was pursued, and dropped several very alarming hints relating to the character and designs of our supposed pursuer; these hints had such an effect upon me, that I again became a prey to the most painful apprehensions. I now fancied that I saw moving figures in the shade of the trees bending in the blast, and the wind, which shook the wild plants on the rock, inspired me with terror.

“We soon emerged from the hollow way, and beheld before us a lofty eminence, shrouded almost to its summit by woods, from the centre of which arose the rude towers of a decayed fortress, now glowing with the last rays of the declining sun.

My

“ My conductor asked if it would be possible that we should extricate ourselves from the mountains before it became dark ; and being informed that it was not, he resolved to turn aside from the beaten track, and repose, during the night, amid the ruins.

“ But,” continued Margarita, “ I enter into too minute a detail of these events ; it is sufficient to say that the guide conducted us by the nearest way to the fortress, which we reached before it was quite dark.

“ Having passed through a ruined court, we entered a hall, the extent of which was but imperfectly ascertained by the light of our torches. The trees of the adjoining forest had in many places made their way through the broken walls ; long and dark arcades branched out from the
hall,

hall, leading probably to other chambers; through these the cold air swept in fullen murmurs.

“The servant, having placed before us the provisions which he had brought with him, retired with the guide to a distant part of the ruins, leaving me alone with my masked companion.

“In this situation, being perhaps more than usually affected by the gloominess of the scene, I could not refrain from shedding tears, and lamenting the misery to which I was condemned; and once again, yet without a prospect of success, I attempted to soften the obduracy of my persecutor.

“I threw myself at his feet in despair rather than hope; I pressed his hand within mine, and while I elevated my glistering eyes to him, I deplored my orphan
state,

state, and the unkindness of my parents, who, depriving me in infancy of their protection, had exposed me to miseries, from which the compassion of strangers, had hitherto preserved me—"But now," I added, "now that I am torn from my adopted parents, I am become an orphan indeed."

"An orphan!" he repeated, while he raised me in his arms, and pressed me to his heart, "Oh Margarita, innocent and ill-fated Margarita! I will be your guardian, your preserver; you shall never want a protector in me!"

"As he uttered these words, his voice faltered, and his whole frame seemed agitated with conflicting passions.

"While these words of comfort still vibrated on my ear, and my heart beat with a momentary transport, the sound of

a distant voice was wafted to us in the breeze.

“We are betrayed, we are ruined,” exclaimed my companion, in an agitated tone. At that instant I beheld the figure of a man passing beneath a grated window near which we stood; he seemed to bend his course towards the gateway of the ruins;—another instantly followed; his tall and majestic form was shrouded in a dark mantle, and his cap was drawn close over his face. He made his way through the clustering branches of the trees, and approached the window, where we remained fixed with horror.

“I had but a momentary view of his countenance as he raised his eyes towards us, yet the expression of it was such as I never, never can forget—it was disclosed
most

most fully to my view by the light which flashed upon it from within.

“The fiercest passions of which human nature is capable, were pictured on his gaunt and ferocious features; cunning and cruelty lurked in his dark eye, and a smile of malice distorted his lips when he beheld me.

“While I still gazed upon him, the emotions of grief and horror which my companion betrayed, inspired me with a degree of terror and amazement hitherto unknown to me.

“He struck his clenched hand upon his forehead; he groaned, and implored the pity of Heaven; he clasped me in his arms, and vowed never more to part from me; and again he pushed me from him, and lamented his own weakness.

“At

“At length he became calm, but this calmness seemed to partake in some degree the nature of despair; he folded his arms, and permitted the dreadful stranger, who now appeared at the entrance of the hall, to approach and seize my hand without attempting to defend me.—

“Madam,” said this unknown tyrant, “I now summon you to submit yourself to my authority. I foresaw the irresolution of him to whose charge I resigned you, and I now resolve myself to provide for your security.”—

“He uttered these words with a sarcastic smile, and endeavoured to draw me from the hall, perhaps, as I then feared, from his cruel and menacing air, to terminate at once my sufferings and my life.

“My cries and earnest supplications for mercy at length aroused my former companion

companion to a lively participation of my terrors, and induced him to betray those sentiments of affection which he had hitherto endeavoured to conceal.

“He rushed forwards, and disengaging my hand from that of the stranger, clasped me in his arms.—“My Margarita, my beloved child!” he exclaimed, “it is your father who now presses you to his heart, and vows never more to abandon you.”—

“I was unable to make any reply; the emotions which this avowal had excited within my breast, were such as for a moment wholly overcame me, and I scarcely knew what passed till I was recalled to a knowledge of my present situation by the intemperate rage of my persecutor.

“This imprudent confession,” he exclaimed, as he drew his sword, and endeavoured

deavoured to tear me from my father, "this womanish weakness has disconcerted all my lenient purposes, and rendered the harshest measures necessary."

"What," exclaimed my father, "would you murder my child? Rather would I myself be condemned to death. My spirit is not as yet sufficiently subdued to submit to this cruel indignity; I will preserve her at the hazard even of my life."

"Remember," answered the other, "that the honour of your house, as well as your life, is at stake."

"Shall I preserve the honour of my house by sacrificing my daughter?" replied my father; "I would have incurred any danger, rather than have stooped to an act so base."

"That spirit of independence but ill becomes you in my presence," said the

stranger, in a menacing tone; “you know that, when irritated, I seldom pardon the offender;—I am resolute too;—neither the remembrance of former friendship, neither the ties of blood, nor the pleadings of pity, can divert me from a determination once made.” —

“In uttering these words he sheathed his sword, and retreated towards the door of the hall.

“At that instant all my father’s courage seemed at once to forsake him; he called upon the tyrant to return, and implored his mercy in the most pathetic terms.

“The stranger stopped, and turned to gaze upon him with a ferocious and triumphant smile.

“All hope now seemed to be lost! I feared that my protector would abandon me, and I burst into tears. My father
paid

paid little regard to these tears; he followed my persecutor into the court, where he remained in earnest conversation with him till the dawn of day, at which time he returned alone into the hall, masked as usual, and wearing an air of the deepest sorrow.

"Margarita," he said, "we may now continue our journey."

"I endeavoured to assume the appearance of cheerfulness, and congratulated him upon having escaped the dangers with which the stranger had menaced him.

"Mention not that subject," he answered, with terrifying sternness.

"Ah, wherefore this severity?" I asked.
"Have you so soon forgotten what passed between us on the past night when you called me your child?"

"Henceforth," he replied, hastily interrupting me, "I command you never to speak on that subject."

"I obeyed; and never afterwards presumed to mention what had passed at the fortress.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

“FROM that time,” she proceeded, “we continued our journey without molestation ; we soon left the mountains, and entered the high road which leads from Vienna to Leipfic. My father, during the whole of the time, remained masked in my presence, and treated me with a degree of reserve and severity which greatly aggravated the horrors of my situation.

“On the evening of the sixth day, after having quitted the fortress, we reached

the Castle of Rosendhall; my father having delivered me to the care of the Countess, left; me nor have I from that time ever seen him.

“For the first fortnight of my residence here, I was confined to my apartment by a fever, during which time I was occasionally visited by the Lady of Rosendhall; she treated me with coolness, and even with haughtiness, yet she assured me that I had nothing to fear at the castle, provided that I would endeavour to reconcile myself to my situation.

“I assured her that I would do every thing in my power to merit her esteem; but to cease to regret my former friends I said was impossible.—

“In time, Margarita,” she replied, “you will form new connexions and friendships,

friendships, which will amply compensate you for the loss you have sustained.”—

“ I sighed, and entreated her to inform me by whom I had been brought to the castle. —

“ Much of your history is known to me,” was the answer she made ; “ I am informed of every important event that has happened to you from the time in which you were placed under the protection of Canon Bernardo, and most solemnly assure you, that the state of ignorance in which you are with regard to some particular circumstances, is the only state in which you have any chance of happiness.”

“ As soon as my health was sufficiently re-established, I was permitted to explore the beautiful recesses of the forest, accompanied by a female attendant, who

feldom left me. But perceiving that the amusements which prevailed in the castle were such as I could not approve, I continued to live much in solitude, which was peculiarly congenial to me in my desolate situation.

“The Countess encouraged this love of retirement in me, and seldom seemed pleased if I was compelled, by chance, to mingle with her party.

“Many weeks had elapsed while things remained in this state, and I was become, in some degree, reconciled to my fate, when, by an unfortunate event, I incurred the displeasure of the Countess.

“One evening as I sat alone in the library, listening to the distant sound of sweet music, with which the Lady of Rosendhall sometimes regaled her guests, the Baron of Wermisdorf, a young gentleman

tleman whom I had frequently seen at the castle, entered the room, and having apologized for the intrusion, commenced a conversation, in which he took occasion to represent to me the dangers of my present situation. He assured me, of what I had been already too well convinced, that the Countess was very unfit to be the guardian of a young and inexperienced person ; that her principles were corrupt, and her conduct incorrect ; that although her beauty and engaging manners might fascinate a youthful mind, yet they would render her more dangerous, by placing her defects in a less repulsive point of view. He spoke with an air of candour and sincerity, and intreated me, if the option was left me, to quit the Castle of Rosendhall.

"If the Countess is really what you affirm her to be, my Lord," I replied, "I am astonished that she should be countenanced and encouraged in her errors by those, whose example might prove widely prejudicial."

"There are many," returned the Baron gaily, "who, like myself, visit the Castle of Rosendhall, to waste an idle hour, or banish a gloomy thought. Our reputation receives no injury from our intercourse with it's lovely possessor; we know the world too well to be deluded by her arts, or affected by her example. Her smiles animate us for a moment, but we think of her no more. We visit the Castle of Rosendhall with pleasure, and leave it without regret. Such, however, Madam, is not your case; your reputation is not equally secure from the shafts
of

of calumny; your mind will be tainted by the scenes to which you are daily witness, and your happiness for ever forfeited. Confide not, I beseech you, in your own innocence;—return to your friends; or if,” he added, “you have no home, no friend to whom to have recourse, you shall find an asylum in the Castle of Wermisdorf, and a protector in my sister.”

“My Lord,” I said, interrupting him, “I am fully sensible of the kindness of your offer; but judge whether I ought to accept it. You are a stranger to me, nor are the circumstances in which you are introduced to me such as are likely to prejudice me in your favour. If you are persuaded of the criminality of the Countess, wherefore do you associate with her? Why should you enter

a house from whence virtue is banished ? But if she is not justly accused, these precautions are needless."

"The Baron coloured, but was prevented from making any reply by the appearance of the Lady of Rosendhall herself: her cheeks were flushed with jealous rage; she imagined that I had endeavoured to conciliate the favour of the Baron, and she prohibited my future appearance before any of her guests. It was in obedience to this command that I fled you yesterday; I feared my attendant, and therefore would not recognize you."—

The bell at that moment tolled the hour of four, and Albert, however reluctant, was compelled to separate from Margarita. He led her to the door of her chamber, and withdrew, praying
Heaven

Heaven to bless her, and favour their escape. He spent the remainder of the time usually devoted to repose in forming his plans for the ensuing day ; he resolved to leave Rosendhall Castle as soon as possible in the course of the morning, and as he had no doubt that he could procure leave of absence from his regiment for a few weeks, he flattered himself that no event would take place to obstruct his plan of extricating Margarita from her wretched situation.

It was at a late hour that the Countess appeared at breakfast, during which repast every thing passed as usual.

The Chevalier conversed with his accustomed gaiety; and the Lady of Rosendhall, while she appeared attentive to him, from time to time fixed her inquiring eyes

eyes on Albert, whose countenance betrayed the anxiety of his mind.

The repast being concluded, she proposed to Albert, that they should visit the pleasure-ground previous to his return to Leipzig; and, having thrown a veil over her head, she took his arm, and led him to the gates of the castle, from whence they descended into a beautiful lawn, shaded by the trees of the adjoining forest.

A stream of water tumbling from the rocky heights which arose above the castle, was collected into an extensive lake at the bottom of the lawn.

Over a narrow part of this lake was thrown a stone bridge, whose sculptured arches represented the columns of a temple rising from the water.

The

The Countess and Albert crossed the lake, and ascended the hill, whose steepes were dressed with a variety of shrubs; amid the shadowy recesses of a beechen wood, which crowned the summits of the hill, appeared the ruins of an ancient edifice, which had escaped the ravages of time.

To this beautiful spot the Lady of Rosendhall conducted her youthful companion; and as she reclined against the broken pillars of the temple, she lamented, in the most soothing accents, that he should yield to a melancholy, which rendered him insensible to the pleasures and gaieties of youth. She used every argument to induce him to banish the recollection of past afflictions, and described in the most animated terms, those distinctions

tions to which his numerous excellencies entitled him.

Albert made no reply; his former admiration of the Countess was converted into disgust, which he was incapable of concealing. He gazed upon her for a moment with cool indifference, and again directed his eyes to the beautiful and sublime objects which presented themselves to his view.

The vast forest of Rosendhall extended itself at his feet, from which arose, in stately magnificence the rude towers of a monastery, and yet more remote, without the confines of the forest, were seen the city of Leipzig, and the Elbe winding through the distant plains. As he contemplated this scene, the form of his beloved Margarita presented itself to his imagination; he retraced in rapid thought
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the series of affliction to which she had been condemned, and recollected, with shame and remorse, the sorrow which his impetuosity had recently occasioned her.

The Countess observed his silence and evident anxiety of mind, and her vanity disposed her to attribute them to their separation, which must soon take place. She believed that the duties of his station demanded his immediate return to Leipzig; she imagined that he prepared to leave the castle with reluctance; and while she exulted in the fancied success of her charms, she endeavoured to confirm their dominion over his heart. With this view she assumed her sweetest smiles, and modulated her voice to its softest cadence. While with one hand she held his, she extended the other towards the forest below:—"Nature," she said, "who distributes

tributes her favours with partial fondness, has endowed me with a heart formed for the tenderest sympathies; to console the unfortunate, to sooth the afflicted mind, is the sweetest task I know. If in your intercourse with the world," she added, "you should feel the edge of disappointment, or the anguish of confidence betrayed, fly to the Castle of Rosendhall; here you shall find a peaceful retreat from the tumultuous scenes of public life, a harbour secure from every storm."

She paused, but Albert made no reply; —he drew his hand from her's, and his cheeks glowed with indignation which laboured for utterance, at the moment when the sound of several voices was heard to proceed from amid the trees.

The Countess of Rosendhall, displeased at this interruption, haughtily demanded
who

who it was that dared thus boldly to intrude upon her ; and, turning to Albert, had already proposed that they should pursue their walk, when, to their mutual astonishment, Margarita appeared, advancing towards them, amid the ruins, followed by the Chevalier Conradi. Her air was dignified, and her countenance had assumed an expression of displeasure. She had met the Chevalier as she walked with her attendant in the wood, and he had presumed to address her with that freedom with which he had been accustomed to treat the Countess.

On seeing Albert and the Lady of Rosendhall, she stopped, but was prevented from retiring by the Chevalier, who, seizing her hand with his usual gaiety, would have entreated her pardon for his importunities, when Albert rushed forward,

forward, and rudely grasping his arm, reproved him severely for his ill-timed levity.

The Chevalier, irritated by the impetuosity of his companion, still detained the hand of Margarita, who trembled lest anger should induce Albert to betray that secret on which all their hopes depended. Nor were her apprehensions wholly groundless. The Lady of Rosendhall had begun to penetrate the real occasion of that melancholy which she had recently attributed to another cause. She had marked the expression of his countenance when Margarita appeared, and observed the ardour with which he protected her from the insults of the Chevalier,

She, however, found means to conceal the jealousy which agitated her bosom; she commanded Conradi to desist from molesting

molesting the young lady ; and taking the hand of Margarita, led her back in silence to the castle.

Albert for an instant believed that all was lost, that in an unguarded moment he had betrayed the secret of his attachment to Margarita ; but his heart was not formed to retain painful impressions ; one smile from the Lady of Rosendhall revived every hope, and as he returned towards Leipzig, he flattered himself that nothing would arise to obstruct his most sanguine wishes.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

HOW different were the sentiments of Margarita!—She no longer entertained a hope—she was persuaded that the Countesses had penetrated the important mystery, and would find means to intercept their flight.

She spent the remainder of the morning in painful solicitude, and the decisive hour approached when the Lady of Rosendhall entered her apartment;—her aspect was haughty and commanding, and her cheeks were flushed with anger.

“Marga-

“Margarita,” she said, as she advanced towards her, “I could once have loved you—I would indeed have been a mother to you ; but you have proved yourself unworthy of my esteem.”

“By what means can I have offended you, Madam?” she asked, in a hesitating tone.

“An explanation,” returned the Countess, “would at present but delay us. Follow me,” she added ; “beneath my roof you shall no longer find an asylum.”

Margarita involuntarily drew back.—“Ah! whither,” she exclaimed, “would you conduct me? Where shall I find repose?”

“You might have enjoyed tranquillity in the Castle of Rosendhall,” she replied, “but you have forfeited my protection ;
you

you have twice found means to deceive me; shall I a third time allow myself to be duped by your arts?"

"By my arts?" repeated Margarita, while the colour faded from her cheek.

"Remember the Baron of Wermisdorf," said the Countess; "but if time should have effaced the recollection of your conduct on that occasion from your memory, you will not presume to plead ignorance in respect to a late transaction. By what means," she added, with a sarcastic smile, "could the daring Albert discover the retreat of his beloved Margarita?—Ah, you change colour; you no longer presume upon your innocence; you no longer aspire to my favour."

As she uttered these words she seized her hand, and led her into the courts of
the

the castle, where a coach waited their arrival.

Margarita perceived that resistance and complaint were equally fruitless ; she followed the Countess to the carriage, and allowed herself to be conveyed from the castle without a murmur ;—her heart however was a prey to the deepest sorrow, and her mind was so entirely occupied by painful reflections, that the triumphant smiles and insulting expressions of the Lady of Rosendhall passed wholly unregarded by her.

“ You must resign yourself to your fate, and receive your present misfortunes as the consequence of a vain attempt to deceive me !” said the Countess, who rejoiced in her power to humiliate her, whom she had hitherto considered as a dangerous rival.

Margarita elevated her eyes towards her for a moment, and again directed them to a remote part of the forest, where, amid the openings of the wood, she had caught a transient glimpse of her beloved Albert, as he urged his spirited courser towards the appointed spot. This was an object which subdued her former fortitude; the tear glistened in her eye, and flowed down her cheek, while her whole frame was agitated by convulsive sobs.

The emotions of grief which Margarita betrayed, seemed but to animate and enliven the Lady of Rosendhall.

“Those tears,” she said, “are, I trust, the effusions of contrition and penitence, the tokens of a prudent submission to superior power; for although you may appear to be deserted and neglected, yet every action of your life is observed; and
however

however circumspect you may fancy yourself in your proceedings, you will find it impracticable to elude the vigilance of your mysterious guardian."

"If such is my situation," returned Margarita, "it is by no means a singular one. There is a Being who scrutinizes all our most secret thoughts, and has power to protect the innocent and oppressed."

"Peace," said the Lady of Rosendhall, irritated by this reply, "am I bound to protect and cherish a child whose parents disown her? Shall I sacrifice my peace to a brother?" And she hesitated.

"A brother!" repeated Margarita; "is it possible that we should be so nearly connected?"

"From whence," replied the Countess,
Q 2 haughtily,

haughtily, "do you draw that conclusion?"

The evening was far advanced when the coach descended into a deep glen, from which the last rays of light were excluded by the overhanging woods. At the foot of a high and rugged hill the Countess and Margarita alighted, and were conducted by several servants, bearing torches before them, to a winding path, by which they ascended the steep acclivity. The vapours of night rested on the vale below, while the wind assailed the summits of the hills. But Margarita was insensible to cold or fatigue; she could only think of her beloved Albert, and the sad defeat of all his hopes.

They had already reached the utmost heights of the hill, where a venerable fabric of rude masonry was seen by the
light

light of the torches. The narrow windows, grated with iron, and high encircling walls, suggested all the horrors of endless captivity to the affrighted Margarita.

“Have pity upon me!” she exclaimed, as she endeavoured to withdraw her hand from the Countess; “must I be condemned to perpetual imprisonment? How have I merited so severe a doom?”

“Be not alarmed,” said the Lady of Rosendhall, pointing to the great gates, now thrown widely open, “what can you fear within those sacred courts? A monastic life has been the choice of many young and lovely as yourself.”

“Must I then for ever bid adieu to all I now hold dear?” exclaimed Margarita in an agony of grief. “But if Heaven requires the sacrifice,” she

added, in a calmer tone, "I submit." She no longer resisted, but allowed herself to be led by the Countess through the folding gates, which were instantly closed upon them.

They passed through the outer courts into a spacious hall, where a single lamp, suspended from the ceiling, afforded an obscure light.

The Lady of Rosendhall still continued to grasp the trembling hand of Margarita, whose cheeks were pale, and whose eyes, wild with terror, were fixed on a gloomy female figure, which advanced from the farther part of the hall. Her limbs were shrouded in a dusky mantle, and a sable veil, thrown over her head, but half concealed a mournful and dejected countenance.

"Holy

"Holy sister," said the Lady of Rosendhall, "I have at length brought you this unfortunate child; beneath this hallowed roof she will soon regain the tranquillity of her mind, and your edifying conversation will teach her the due estimate of all earthly gratifications."

"The Blessed Virgin preserve her!" said the Nun, heaving a deep sigh.

"The sacred employments of the holy sisterhood," continued the Countess, "will become grateful to her, and she will soon break those ignoble bonds of love which attach her to the world."

"Oh Albert, Albert," exclaimed Margarita, "must I forget you? Must I forget the beloved protectors of my infancy?—And for what?—Does Heaven, does virtue require this sacrifice?"—She

uttered these words, and sunk almost senseless upon the pavement.

The Nun instantly sprung towards her, and catching her in her arms, "Oh, my beloved, my unhappy lady!" she cried, while tears bedewed her pallid cheeks, "do I see you reduced to such misery, and can I afford you no consolation?—Must the faults of the parents," she added, while she raised her eyes to heaven, "be thus heavily requited on the innocent children?"

"Peace," said the Lady of Rosendhall, in a low tone; "your weakness will betray you."

"No," replied the Nun, "no, it is impossible. I am but too fully sensible of what would be the fatal consequences of my imprudence."

"If

"If you know my parents," exclaimed Margarita, clasping her hand within her's, "intercede for me; entreat them to receive their unhappy child, to spare her these cruel trials."

"Would to Heaven," returned the Nun, looking earnestly on the Countess, "that I might be permitted to plead for the Lady Margarita, that my intercessions might at least soften the severities of her destiny!"

"Be prudent," said the Lady of Rosendhall, in a threatening tone. "Margarita, adieu!" she added, as she left the hall, "endeavour to be resigned to your fate."

When alone with her melancholy companion, Margarita used every means to induce her, by a relation of former events, to terminate that suspense which had embittered the happiest days of her life.

"In the name of Heaven," she said, "inform me wherefore I am brought here; wherefore was I torn from my friends at Vienna? or rather," she added, "since I am persuaded that nothing is concealed from you, tell me wherefore I was abandoned by my parents—why their protection is still denied me?"

"Alas!" replied the weeping Nun, "I am not permitted to unravel these awful mysteries which involve the fate of many; oaths the most solemn bind me to eternal secrecy. — Oh! could it have been possible," she added, as she raised her eyes to heaven, and pressed her united hands to her heart, "could it have been possible in those hours of guilty levity to have foreseen the complicated miseries with which an avenging futurity was charged!—But what do I say?—Whither does

does my recollection lead me?—Pardon me, beloved lady, I would willingly afford you some consolation,” she added, “I would willingly alleviate your present distress, and restore you to that happiness to which your virtues entitle you: but, alas! I am but the minister of superior authority.”

She paused, and wiped away the tear which trembled in her eye; and Margarita, who no longer felt those terrors with which her appearance had first inspired her, kindly took her hand, and while she assured her that she was convinced of her good-will towards her, promised to urge no farther an explanation, which she perceived was impossible for her to grant.

The Nun looked upon her, for a moment, with affectionate solicitude; she

prayed the Holy Virgin to console and protect her ; and finding that she had suffered much from fatigue and anxiety, she led her to her own apartment, where every thing had been provided for her reception.

The chamber of the Nun answered in size to the hall below : from the decayed magnificence of the furniture, it seemed formerly to have been prepared for some illustrious devotee. Beside the bed, whose tattered hangings still glistened with the tarnished gold, a simple pallet had been placed for the holy sister.

Margarita gazed for a moment on the wretched habitation which was destined her, and sinking upon a chair, yielded, without restraint, to the excess of her grief.

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The compassionate Nun endeavoured to persuade her to take some refreshment, but her entreaties were fruitless; vain were all her efforts to console her. Reason seemed for a time to have lost its influence over her mind, and from reflection she found but an aggravation of her sufferings.

The Nun watched beside her the greater part of the night, during which time her agitated spirits received little relief from sleep: but the images of horror which haunted her mind, at length became more indistinct; a faint hope, that the same paternal affection which had sheltered her from her unknown enemy in the ruined fortress, would spare her the sorrows of perpetual imprisonment, now dawned upon her benighted soul. Albert and his friends at the beloved Canonry were perhaps
not

not lost to her for ever; Heaven in it's mercy might chastise her for a time, but her patient endurance might obtain a return of it's favours. While encouraging such reflections, her heart ceased to beat with grief and terror, her eyes were closed, and a sweet sleep absorbed every faculty.

When awakened by the sound of the bell ringing for matin prayers, she found herself entirely alone; she arose, and opened the casement to receive the morning air, and while she reclined against the iron bars, contemplated in deep silence the gloomy scene which presented itself before her. The cloistered walls of the convent intercepted the view of the forest of Rosendhall, and the ivy had climbed to the highest summits of the opposite towers.

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In her present melancholy state she found little cause for hope; she was weary of forming fruitless conjectures, and her thoughts insensibly returned to the days of happiness she had once enjoyed. The images of Canon Bernardo and his excellent sister presented themselves before her, and she remembered with deep regret that paternal kindness which had formerly constituted her felicity.

Oppressed with painful reflection, she retired hastily from the window, and throwing herself upon a chair, continued to weep till the return of the Nun, who now urged her, by every argument which religion or prudence could dictate, to endeavour to reconcile herself to her situation.

“Be assured, my dear lady,” she said,
“that those who have the direction of
your

your fate, are too deeply interested in your welfare to subject you to unnecessary sufferings. You know not what may be the happy consequences of a patient submission to their will."

Margarita felt her grief in some degree abated by the hopes with which the Nun had inspired her ; she soon became more calm, and as her mind recovered it's former energy, she endeavoured to prepare herself for that life of religious retirement to which she might perhaps be devoted.

She frequently, in company with the holy sisterhood, visited the chapel of the convent, and united with them in the discharge of their sacred duties.

She found in the Nun a kind and affectionate protectress ; her conversation was dictated by a mind naturally lively and

and well acquainted with the world, but softened and improved by misfortune.

She often discoursed with some degree of gaiety, and would relate many of the most remarkable events which had recently taken place in the Courts of Europe. On one subject only she was reserved; she never would reveal any part of her former life, or disclose the circumstances which had induced her to renounce the world.

Her kind attentions insensibly won upon the affections of Margarita, and she preferred her society to the splendid and elegant gaieties of Rosendhall Castle; but her heart was still oppressed with sorrow, and melancholy pervaded her most tranquil moments.

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